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Number 65

FIRST THINGS

bonhoeffer and the sovereign state

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

dehumanization triumphant

LEON R. KASS

daniel goldhagen's holocaust

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

the achievement of alasdair macintyre

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JOHN J. DiIULIO, JR.

The Last Testament of Christian de Chergé

Joseph A. Komonchak on John Courtney Murray

James Nuechterlein on Insults

Terry Teachout on Pro-Life Music

William A. Schambra on Citizenship

ALSO: Bruce C. Hafen and Jonathan O. Hafen
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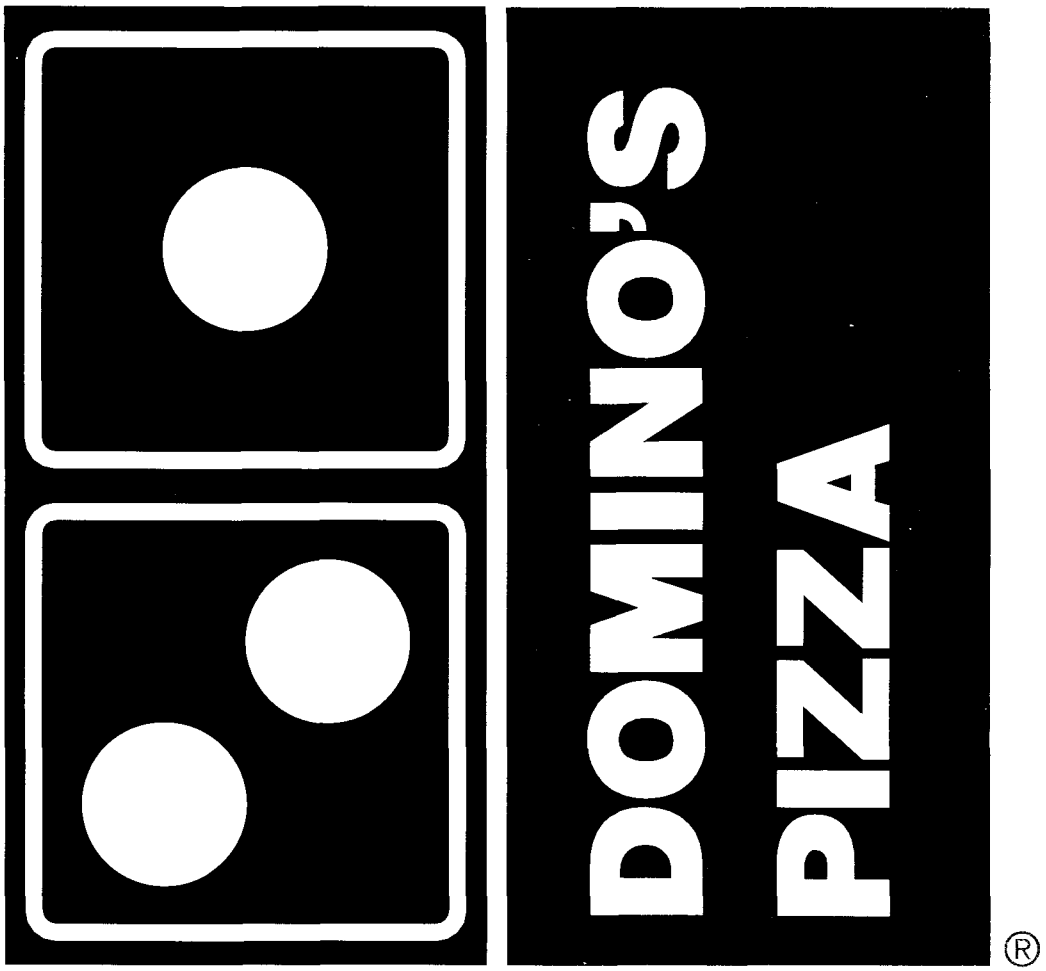

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FIRST THINGS

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Poetry by *Judith Deem Dupree* (12)

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FIRST THINGS

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Who Is Behind Physician-Assisted Suicide?

Along with the editors of First Things, I deplore the decision of the Ninth Circuit Court ("The Ninth Circuit's Fatal Overreach," May) in its ruling that the Constitution grants a "liberty right" to physician-assisted suicide (PAS). It is a bad decision in support of a bad cause. Nonetheless, the line of dissent taken by the editorial seems to me naive and unhelpful.

The naivete lies in assuming that if we get PAS in this country, it will somehow be the fault of the courts. On the contrary, this is as good an instance as one can find of late where the courts are doing little more than ratifying public opinion. While it is true that there is, as the editorial asserts, significant organized opposition to PAS, it is more importantly true that public opinion polls have, since the late 1970s, shown strong majority public support for euthanasia and/or physician-assisted suicide. It is, we should sorrowfully note, a popular movement.

It is also important to observe that, while the American Medical Association opposes PAS, the majority opinion of American physicians (not all of whom belong to, much less follow, the policies of the AMA) is favorable toward the practice. The First Things editorial suggested that there would be "open insurrection" if the Supreme Court made the decision of the Ninth Circuit "the law of the land." On the contrary, given the state of public opinion, there could well be "open insurrection" if the Court declared unconstitutional laws prohibiting PAS. Even now, prosecutors nationwide show little interest in pursuing those physicians, probably many, who already illegally practice PAS. That indifference is already a kind of mild insurrection. Anti-littering laws are prosecuted more zealously.

For all those reasons, it seems to me naive to think that the courts are the problem here. It is thus unhelpful to excoriate the "arrogance" of the court. I did not, moreover, notice anyone opposed to PAS excoriating John Noonan's earlier Ninth Circuit opinion upholding the constitutionality of laws *against* PAS; but he intervened in a legislative matter no less than the larger and later Ninth Circuit panel. Nor can I imagine that the latter panel would have been attacked for arrogance if its opinion had gone the other way. I take it to be a central part of the American constitutional system that the courts are called upon to determine the constitutionality of state and federal statutes. They may be wrong in their conclusions, as the Ninth Circuit (and then later the Second Circuit) surely was, but that does not make them arrogant.

None of this might matter but for one point. The most disturbing feature of the present struggle over PAS is that it does have such significant public support. While the Hemlock Society and other groups have in recent years pressed for the legalization of PAS, even they are following as much as leading public opinion. The majority public support for PAS that first appeared in the late 1970s was not engineered by organized advocacy groups. There was not even much public discussion of the issue at that time. It was truly a grassroots movement, and in great part it still is. The pro-euthanasia/PAS groups did not become important or influential until the late 1980s, well after the public was already supportive.

If this is, then, a popular movement, as all the evidence suggests, the real target of criticism must be our fellow citizens—not the arrogant courts. Those citizens have become convinced that they need the availability of PAS to reduce the chance that they will die a bad death at the hands of American medicine. They want it, moreover, for *themselves*, not as a way of ridding the country of economic burdens or killing the unwanted (though it could well be used that way).

It will be temptingly easy in the battles ahead to single out the intellectual leadership of the PAS movement, or the courts, as the villains. That is not likely to be effective or on target. The harder and far more

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important task is to persuade a large number of our perfectly decent friends and neighbors that they should not want PAS available for themselves—that it will harm them and many values they treasure. That is a difficult case to make, even though many of us think it easy; we should know better by now. But if it is not made, then the courts are likely to do what they have already demonstrated they can do, simply follow public opinion. It was the citizens of Oregon, after all, not the courts, who first chose to vote favorably for PAS in this country; and they are likely to do it elsewhere also.

One final thought. If you choose to attack Judge Stephen Reinhardt, please add Justice Scalia to the list. For it was he who, in the earlier Supreme Court *Cruzan* decision, said that there is no difference between assisted suicide and the removal of life support and feeding tubes. "The cause of death in both cases," he wrote, "is the suicide's conscious decision to 'put an end to his own existence.'"

This dictum—which trashes ancient medical, theological, and legal principles—was favorably invoked in the no less obnoxious opinion of the Second Circuit Court. If people are going to have "painful thoughts about their allegiance to this political and legal regime," Judge Scalia must be included as part of that "regime." The problem, unhappily, is that everyone—conservatives and liberals alike, Democrats and Republicans—has had a hand in the nasty slide toward PAS. That's why the struggle ahead will be uncommonly hard: the combination of sympathetic judges and favorable public opinion will be tough to beat. The evil of PAS is seen as a positive good, and what a tragedy that is.

Daniel Callahan
The Hastings Center
Briarcliff Manor, NY

The editors reply:

We agree that public education on the issue is urgently needed, but current sentiment is not so monolithic as Dr. Callahan suggests. Polls that ask vague questions about "aid in dying" or "death with dignity" show overwhelming support; polls about doctors helping patients commit suicide show a different picture. A recent *Washington Post* poll (April 4) shows 50 percent support—with seniors (presumably the most likely "beneficiaries" of this policy) opposing legalization, 54 to 38 percent. Yes, the voters of Oregon did approve an assisted-suicide law in 1994—but similar laws were rejected by the voters of Washington and California, and in the last year they've been rejected by legislatures in thirteen states. The only new laws being enacted on the issue are laws to *ban* assisted suicide. This is why euthanasia supporters turned to the courts: they were losing fairly consistently in the democratic branches of government. As to Judge Noonan and Justice Scalia, Noonan was not intervening in a legislative process but leaving it alone by ruling that the Constitution does not prohibit states from banning assisted suicide. In the *Cruzan* case, Justice Scalia likewise upheld the longstanding American legal tradition against suicide—and he worried that some decisions to refuse basic sustenance serve a suicidal purpose, seeking to end a life rather than to end a particular burdensome treatment. Now pro-euthanasia judges have exploited Scalia to argue that all refusals of treatment are suicides (something Scalia never said). The law lets people assist in withdrawing treatment, it is argued, and therefore the law must let people assist in suicides. That conclusion is not supported by Justice Scalia's reasoning in *Cruzan* and, we are reasonably hopeful, will not be supported in the democratic political process.

Problems with Liberalism and Conservatism

J. Budziszewski in his invective against liberalism ("The Problem with Liberalism," March) and more specifically in his chastisement of the Welfare State tells us that the provision of public funds for the weaker and needier in our society is indistinguishable from robbery, and he insists that "according to Christianity I should give my own help to the needy, taking from no one." . . . Why does he not extend his line of thought to its natural conclusion and argue that we should not demand monies for our children's education? But let's not stop there. Extend it only a bit further: Is a piece of road more *public* and more important than a person? If not, then how can we possibly demand funds for public roads? Instead, why not grasp one other opportunity for us to exercise our charity and so have each one of us voluntarily contribute to his or her allotted path? . . . And let's not dare probe into public institutions that require hundreds of billions of dollars from everyone just for a ghostly potentiality: that of killing other human beings. The author's whole frame of mind supposes an equation between morality and money. The more of the one, the more of the other. . . .

Sus Freire
Oswego, NY

I really must protest J. Budziszewski's assertion that taxation amounts to theft whenever the government uses the monies so collected for something not its proper work, which he defines as "merely punishing wrongdoers and commending right doers," referencing 1 Peter 2:13-14.

The governmental function of "punishing wrongdoers" is a subset of what are commonly referred to as "public goods." The economic argument for governmental provision of public goods is well developed. The argument relates to what is called the "free rider" problem in economics. Some goods or services, by their nature, provide benefits to most, or even all, inhabitants of a society. The example normally used is national defense. Surely we are all benefited by the existence of a national military that protects us from foreign invasion. Yet, without governmental compulsion, there is no reason for me personally to contribute a sizable amount to obtaining this good. If I contribute and no one else does, I've thrown my money away. If I don't contribute, and everyone else does, I

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will attain the same level of defense, but be able to use all of my money on myself. The tendency of the market, then, is to underfund such public goods in the absence of the government. This is the economic rationale of governmental taxation, and governmental involvement in the economy. . . .

Proponents of governmental involvement in the fight against poverty make a strong case that the fight should be considered a public good. As such, it is appropriate for that fight to be funded by the government via taxation. This would not constitute theft, either in economic theory or in light of Scripture. That the government's current programs are largely counterproductive, and that we can do better, are entirely different issues.

Stephen Tuszynski
Alburtis, PA

For some time I have been puzzled by the emergence of a call for lower taxes as a rallying cry for religious conservatives. J. Budziszewski's characterization of taxation as theft baffles me even more.

Both Christ and St. Paul gave instructions to "render unto Caesar" (Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:7)—supporting not simply a police or judicial function, but a government that made use of tax money to support an occupying army, gladiatorial contests, and an imperial cult. How tempting it would be to discount the validity of such a government. What St. Peter actually said in this regard was not that the proper role of government was "*merely* punishing wrongdoers and commending rightdoers" (emphasis added), but that Christians were to be subject to human institutions, including the emperor and his deputies. . . .

One need not subscribe to a radical policy of redistributionism in order to acknowledge corporate, as well as individual, responsibility. Often our responsibilities require coordination of effort and resources in order to be effectively discharged, a project that falls to government. . . .

Deborah Smith
Leeds, MA

J. Budziszewski makes a strong argument that we cannot be neutral about such subjects as the availability of (induced) abortions. I believe a Christian should have nothing to do with infanticide or abortion. However, I believe that individuals need to decide this moral issue for themselves freely. I may invite others to hold my beliefs, but under no circumstances would I try to compel or coerce individuals to follow a certain religious doctrine that I may hold. . . . It is not a contradiction to personally abhor the callousness and immorality of abortion and yet accept it as a fact of life for people living in their own "post-Christian" age. . . .

I felt a little uneasy with the author's suggestion that we should practice a laissez-faire Christianity in the face of misery. Being partly Irish in ancestry I was brought up with a strong folk tradition as to the moral lesson of the Potato Famine. A government is more than paying the soldiers and forgetting the rest. If a government is just and good it will do its utmost to provide sustenance and security to the many who are poor and without food. Maybe this means making a lot of mistakes, but I always remember my father saying it was better to strike out swinging than to take a called third strike. "Sure FDR and Churchill struck out a lot, but they had a great slugging percentage."

If that means I have a vestige of New Deal liberalism, so be it. I was brought up to believe that FDR was one of the "good guys," a soldier of freedom and an apostle of democracy. But then FDR never hesitated to speak of Christianity as "our religion." If he had, he would have definitely been suspect.

Richard K. Munro
Bakersfield, CA

Having now read the two essays by Mr. Budziszewski on liberalism (March) and conservatism (April), I am confirmed in my belief that neither word has been left with any continuing usefulness. As has been the fate with "socialism," neither liberalism nor conservatism is any longer usefully descriptive. At one time, most clearly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these terms had fairly specific realms of meaning. John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Benjamin Constant—among others—had given meaning to liberalism; Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, Thomas Carlyle, and the Vicomte de Bonald—among others—had defined conservatism. Others, in the early years of this century, articulated those meanings even further.

The effect of sustained inappropriate usage in the past half century, and the consequence of such essays as those by Mr. Budziszewski, has been to demonize both words. "Liberal" and "conservative" have come to be used, by those holding some other view, in pejorative and derogatory ways. . . . Few seem to remember, or apparently care to know, what liberalism and conservatism derived from, and what intelligent and informed "liberals" and "conservatives" continue to hold as basic values and broadly defined political, social, economic, and cultural perspectives. I looked in vain for those understandings in these two essays.

To propose, by way of catalogs of "moral errors," that liberal and conservative perspectives are somehow anathema to the Christian faith is, in fact, to demonize both. Moreover, it is a fundamentally erroneous and irresponsible assertion. To be a witness to the living faith in Christ, to live the life of Spirit—indeed, to be God-centered—does not necessarily preclude holding to conservative or liberal principles. I find no incongruity or difficulty in regarding myself as a believing Christian, a social and political liberal, and a cultural conservative—Mr. Budziszewski's assertions of prevailing "moral error" notwithstanding.

Robert W. Heywood
Flint, MI

J. Budziszewski argues that the compelling-interest doctrine rehabilitated by the Religious Freedom Restoration Act yet leaves us in a situation where "the laws of man are higher than the laws of God." "Perhaps," he writes, "the blame for our troubles

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lies with the Framers, for refusing to distinguish the kind of religion whose exercise should be free from the kind of religion whose exercise should not. But, foolishly thinking ignorance a friend of conscience, we have followed their lead." We too are "afraid to judge among religions."

How might the Framers have distinguished (and how might we distinguish) among "kinds of religion"? On theological grounds? According to whose theology? On civic grounds? This would open the door to still more dramatic objections that here the laws of man have priority. The latter approach may seem to be taken by the Supreme Court in free-exercise cases when it rules that polygamy or the use of peyote, to mention two notable examples, can be prohibited. Yet while the Court sometimes engages in ad hoc consideration of a legally problematic practice, it is constitutionally prevented from considering religions themselves. (Note how even in the wake of the ostensible anti-Mormon polygamy ruling, Mormonism has thrived.) The decisions in *Reynolds v. U.S.* and *Employment Division v. Smith* may, of course, have been wrong or wrongheaded. But if so, we need clarity about why. Surely the state has some legitimate interest in regulating marital arrangements and the use of psychotropic drugs. If, however, the state is understood as *never* having sufficient motive—whether "neutral" or "compelling"—to enforce a law against a contravening religious claim, then how could it possibly "judge among religions"?

Any sober effort at deciding in a difficult free-exercise case necessarily entails an element of prudence. For a government to attempt to act prudently, particularly on questions pertaining to people's ultimate concerns, is surely not always for it to act rightly: the virtue of prudence is exercised with something less than mathematical exactitude. But in a messy modern world where people's ultimate concerns are multifarious, this virtue may be our best hope. At any rate, a modern regime would be ill-advised to rule a priori on "the kinds of religion whose exercise should be free."

Todd R. Flanders
Framingham, MA

J. Budziszewski's article on conservatism contains some very bad reasoning in the section dealing with what the author calls "Caesarism."

Caesarism, for him, is the notion that "the laws of man are higher than the laws of God." Additionally, "the peculiar thing about American Caesarism is that the state never *says* that its laws are higher than the laws of God; it simply refuses to acknowledge *any* laws of God, in the name of equal liberty for all religious sects."

All this means, in practice, is that any religious sect that wants to advance some laws as "laws of God" that should be written up as statutes must do so on purely secular grounds, and not claim for them any authority based on the particular tenets of that sect. Mr. Budziszewski uses the example of the practice of polygamy among the Mormons in the late nineteenth century as an example of "American Caesarism." But all that was asserted by the courts against the Mormons was that while polygamy might well be acceptable within the frame of reference of *that religion,* the state was justified in forbidding it within its own frame of reference, which was not that of any particular religion.

The author concludes by dismissing the efforts of the Congress to clarify the situation with the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which attempts—quite reasonably as I see it—to reinstate the "compelling interest" doctrine as the standard for judgment of matters of freedom of religious practice, saying that "after all, even under the compelling interest doctrine, claims to the free exercise of religion can be swept aside whenever the state thinks its reasons are good enough."

But what other standard would he employ? What would he do in the case of some sect that, as he puts it, takes the position that "even releasing nerve gas in public places can be an exercise of religion"? The simplest answer is that no judgment may be made as to whether this is a valid exercise of religion, and thus enjoys legal immunity from restriction or regulation. Any and all exercise of religion is so immune, but any and all can be regulated or forbidden if the compelling interest of the state is judged to be strong enough, not by the state itself, but by an independent judiciary, upon which all our liberties depend in the final analysis, anyway. . . .

Edmund Weinmann
Huntington, NY

I find myself rather alarmed at J. Budziszewski's covert defense of economic liberalism (his "second" meaning of liberalism) by means of a critique of "government-driven social reform" (his "third," "colloquial" meaning).

This surreptitious defense of economic liberalism is particularly apparent in his criticisms of the "moral errors" of liberalism he terms "expropriationism" and "solipsism." Under the first guise he claims that taxation is theft if done to foster government policies which exceed the mandates of 1 Peter 2:13-14—"punishing wrongdoers and commending right doers." Now, certainly this passage of Scripture cannot be taken as giving a *sufficient* account of the scope of government (as fundamental a governmental function as national defense lies outside these guidelines). Professor Budziszewski has failed to distinguish between *Christian* and properly *political* reasons for governmental policy. There may not be an explicitly Christian mandate for government to provide national defense and otherwise insure the interests of the commonwealth ("promote the general welfare"), but there are good political reasons for doing so that do not violate Christian principle. . . . His attack on all taxation that serves ends outside of moral praise and blame have not a Christian but an ideological basis—one rooted in economic liberalism. . . .

Liberalism can certainly be criticized (in all three of the forms mentioned in the essay). They even should be by any Christian. However, to pretend to critique liberalism (really just welfare state liberalism) from the

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covert perspective of economic liberalism is not to give a Christian critique at all, but an internal critique.

Wylie D. Jones
Cincinnati, OH

Emerson set down the kind of praise that every man of thought and letters would like to receive: "Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. The very hopes of man, the thoughts of his heart, the religion of nations, the manner and morals of mankind are all at the mercy of a new generalization."

Just now I can think of no one more deserving of the honor than J. Budziszewski for his magnificent back-to-back pieces on the respective problems of liberalism and conservatism. Truly, a thinker is loose on this planet, and I congratulate you for having at least briefly confined him in the pages of FIRST THINGS.

His ingenious and persuasive analysis is not to be missed. If I may once more quote (Cranmer): "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest."

John Martin
Brooklyn, NY

J. Budziszewski replies:

I thank my correspondents for their interest. Much they have said deserves more ample comment than I can offer here.

Mr. Freire's main points seem to be that I am a sinful man, I favor killing, I contradict myself, my principles would prohibit several obviously good things, and I equate morality with money. I freely admit the first point, I don't understand the second, and he offers no argument for the third. Point four depends on a false alternative, for neither in education nor in the construction of public roads is it true that the choice lies between pure charity and state monopoly. The argument for point five seems to be that to oppose theft is to oppose generosity. This does not follow. We agree that the best thing to do with one's own money is to give it away; our disagreement concerns the money of other people.

Mr. Tuszynski has mischaracterized what economists mean by "public goods" (they are not the same as things that are good for the public)—but even if he had not, there is a greater hitch in his argument. His tacit premise is that the government policy of offering cash prizes for bearing children out of wedlock really does lift mothers out of poverty. Experience tells another tale: What it does is sink them deeper into it. That is no way to help.

Mrs. Smith rightly turns to Scripture as the final arbiter of disputed questions. But what does it actually say? Jesus does not instruct us to "render unto Caesar" but to "render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." Moreover, the same apostle who admonishes us to be subject to human institutions says in Acts 5:29 that in cases of conflict, "We ought to obey God rather than men." The disagreement between Mrs. Smith and myself is not over whether Christians have corporate responsibilities, but over which *corpus* chiefly bears them: the State or the Body of Christ.

Mr. Munro says that as a Christian he will have nothing to do with infanticide or abortion, but that people must decide those moral issues freely for themselves. I suppose, then, that although as a Christian I must have nothing to do with matricide, drive-by shootings, or the strangulation of correspondents who disagree with me, people must also decide these moral issues for themselves. The deeper problem with Mr. Munro's letter lies in his opinion that one can hold Christian and anti-Christian worldviews simultaneously. On the contrary, Paul says faith must "cast down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Mr. Heywood seems to argue from inconsistent premises. First he says the meanings of the terms "liberalism" and "conservatism" have become too various to be fixed; second he insists that their meaning be fixed by reference to their origins. A better solution, and the one I adopted, is for every author to state clearly which liberalism or conservatism he has in mind. I would welcome an essay by Mr. Heywood about the classical varieties; why should he not welcome one about the contemporary varieties?

Prudence is not the issue between Mr. Flanders and myself; neutrality is. Suppose terrorists threatened to blow up a school bus unless certain hungry people were fed. Whether they invoked the name of Mao or Jesus would make no difference; my prudential judgment would be to stop them. Prudence, then, is my standard too. But it would be a *Christian* understanding of prudence, informed by the New Testament principle that "no one may do evil that good may result." Needless to say, terroristic prudence is informed by different principles. What we see in this example is that every view of prudence is *some* view of prudence, and the judicial pretense of neutrality merely disguises which one it is. "I do not presuppose any ultimate concern" usually means "Reasons of state are my ultimate concern." In this case we have the moral error I protested.

In telling me what my standard ought to be, Mr. Weinmann falls even harder for the notion that prudence can be neutral. Statutes, he says, must be justified on purely secular grounds. But there are no purely secular grounds. So-called secular creeds, like Fascism, Utilitarianism, and Leninism, are merely incognito religious creeds, no less firmly based on ultimate concerns than their cognito cousins.

Like several other correspondents, Mr. Jones has the mistaken idea that I forbid national defense and demand laissez-faire. In his case the error comes from reading "punishing wrongdoers and commending rightdoers" as the much narrower "[expressing] moral praise and blame." Punishing is more than expressing blame, and I should think that wrongdoers include both military adventurers who drop napalm on my neighbors and businessmen who dump poisons in their water. To be sure, Peter's brief statement does not make the boundaries of punishing wrongdoers and commending

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rightdoers completely clear. However, I cannot imagine a reading of his phrase that would justify the state in taking whatever it wants for whatever reason it thinks good, so I see no reason to revise my critique of expropriationism.

Mr. Martin I simply thank, although of course I cannot accept Cranmer's encomium: the Archbishop was talking about something much better than any article of mine.

My gratitude again to all my correspondents—and if the unknown couple whose April e-mail I accidentally vaporized do not mind sending it again, I will certainly reply.

Same-Sex Marriage

Walter Berns does a characteristically admirable job of sorting out and presenting the pertinent issues in his discussion of same-sex marriages ("Marriage Anyone?" April). However, he is wrong to agree with homosexuals that their claim for equal treatment is generally a fair one. On the contrary, I would argue that there is a clear civic duty to disapprove of homosexuality. Sexual relations between individuals of the same gender epitomize pleasure-seeking without responsibility. No society can hope to survive that grants relationships which cannot produce offspring equivalent status and respect with those that can. Condemnation and some measure of ostracism are in order against the anarchic implications of self-gratification, and a strong ration of support is in order for those who undertake the often self-denying and demanding task of raising children to be praiseworthy citizens. . . .

W. Dain Oliver
Newton Highland, MA

Do we want gay men and women living their lives out in the bright of day where their behavior may be scrutinized by the rest of us? Or do we turn our backs on them hoping the problem will just go away. Should they enjoy the same rights of contractual agreement as we have, passing their property on to whomever they wish? Or are they to continue as second-class citizens. Do we maintain the status quo? Or do we find a way to bring these men and women into the mainstream of civilized life and its promise.

After giving this much thought, and prayer, I have come to the following conclusion. This is not a crisis. This is an opportunity.

Laura Crockett
Northridge, CA

A highly respected scholar, Walter Berns, after reporting on the status and prospects for legal same-sex marriage, pointlessly writes, "Students of the *Republic* will know that Plato proposed to abolish the family, not merely to undermine it but to abolish it altogether."

Students of the *Republic* will remember the three waves of Book 5. At 450c Plato has Glaucon challenge Socrates to "tell us how you think our *guardians* (emphasis added) will share in wives and children. . . ." The first two waves that threaten to drown them are the proposals that females receive the same education, physical as well as mental, as the males; and that there be a community of spouses and children in the *guardian* class. When we get this straight we can appreciate Plato's line of thought. The guardians are charged with protecting and directing the larger community. Hence they should reproduce, for they are the most likely to have progeny able to lead in the next generation; but also, since they have responsibility for the whole polis, they should not be distracted by the cares and concerns of typical parents with their own little brood. This second part of his thinking seems consonant with the Church's long tradition of the celibate priesthood and religious, the understood need for the pastors to be devoted to the whole flock. . . .

More important, Berns would presumably agree that family or family values per se will not bring remoralization of our society. Nothing can be more apparent in our time than that perhaps every family, save the Holy Family, is to some extent dysfunctional. How make families more functional? Can we not learn from Plato that only to the extent that parents and other teachers inculcate the peculiar human excellences of courage, temperance, justice, and prudence will the children be properly educated? And what are family values, in a good family, but these very virtues? Moreover, love commands all that virtue requires, a point made by the Holy Father in *Veritatis Splendor.*

May we then have done with these mistaken and gratuitous attacks on Plato.

Theodore A. Young
Allendale, MI

Walter Berns replies:

Like W. Dain Oliver, I disapprove of homosexuality, but, unlike him, I am not willing to condemn homosexuals. It's a matter of condemning the sin but not the sinner. Still, he is right to think that marriage is somehow connected to procreation, which sets him apart from Laura Crockett. Without saying so, she treats sex as an end in itself, and suggests that by allowing homosexuals to marry they can be brought "into the mainstream of civilized life and its processes." Perhaps, but I have to wonder whether public approval will make homosexuals more sexually responsible or those of us in the "mainstream" less so. Professor Young calls for an end to "these mistaken and gratuitous attacks on Plato." But I didn't attack him, and my mention of him was neither mistaken nor gratuitous. I said that he favors the abolition of the family in his *Republic*—which he clearly does—and the point of this reference was to introduce Rousseau's defense of the family.

(Double) Standards of Speech?

In "When Rights Are Wrong" (April), Professor William J. Stuntz writes eloquently of the need "to create the conditions of civil, decent, respectful discussion." He has undoubtedly read more on the subject than I have, but I don't recall any Christian writers endorsing the decidedly uncivil free-for-all that presently passes for debate on many college campuses.

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Moreover, as he himself admits, most campus speech codes apply only to certain students. The same campus authorities who pounce on white males for racism, sexism, etc. decline to intervene when "oppressed minority" types tear down pro-life posters, shout down speakers they dislike, destroy conservative campus newspapers, and call their opponents every nasty name in the book. Such "political correctness" isn't limited to academe; recently in our local newspaper a letter appeared claiming that black people could say anything they wanted to about whites, because those who had been the object of racism were incapable of being racists themselves.

So, while I'm all for "moving the culture in the right direction" by restoring standards, I can't help feeling that these kinds of double standards really are worse than none at all.

Anne G. Burns
Cos Cob, CT

Anthropology, Theology, and René Girard

As a long time reader of René Girard I was gratified to see J. Bottum's excellent review of his work ("Girard Among the Girardians," March) and especially Girard's own essay ("Are the Gospels Mythical?" April). Girard's work is immensely important in the present climate of violence and ethno-religious politics. It forces us to reexamine the very nature of religion itself, an exercise that is ever necessary and rarely undertaken competently.

The annual spring rite performed by national newsmagazines who interview Scripture scholars about the identity of Jesus always rehearses the same choreography: the Jesus of history in a dialectical *pas de deux* with the Jesus of faith. Girard's reading of Scripture gives us deeper insights than historical-biblical criticism alone or religious belief abstracted from biblical criticism. Girard is a textual critic, in the best literary sense of that word, a brilliant analyst who knows that texts both disclose and conceal the social dynamics of the world from which they emerge.

It is Girard's genius to see Hebrew and Christian Scripture from the perspective of cultural anthropology, especially foundational myths—all of which betray the violent origins of human societies. This method of reading reveals the deepest meaning and significance of the Bible as a radically different account of origins (and community), rescuing the biblical texts from both academic historicism and naive personalism. His analysis of scapegoating, collective murder, human sacrifice, religious and judicial systems allows us to understand both the biblical text and much that we read outside of the text. He explains, for example, why we insist on assigning violence (and the approval of violence) to God in our politics, as well as in our foundational mythologies, and why the violent strategies we have always used to keep the peace are becoming less and less effective.

At the heart of Girard's analysis of the Gospels is his reading of the Passion narrative, a distinctive hermeneutic that he probes anew in this recent essay. His argument here is necessarily compressed, and is shaped to a particular thesis. I believe, nevertheless, that Girard has yet to treat the central event in the Christian story adequately. It is the Resurrection, after all, that defines Christianity. Girard needs to describe the Resurrection event in terms beyond "the rectification of the lie of the guilty victim." The Resurrection is about more than the victim's innocence. It is about the victim's forgiveness of his murderers.

Resurrection goes beyond "reopening the channels of communication" (although it does that). It tells us that mimetic reciprocity (read: retaliation, punishment, "balancing the books") is not the name of God's game. It is not God's way of keeping the peace—or trying to keep the human family in line. The Christian story is about accepting forgiveness in the light of the disclosure that it is *human beings* who desire crucifixions, executions, sacrifices, expulsions, "holy" wars, and *never* God, who can reveal the horror of human violence only by submitting to it.

The biblical texts show us who we are. They show us how wrong we are about sin and justice and judgment. But they also show us who God is and how radically we have misread the nature of our own desires. If, according to Christian belief, Jesus in his return from the dead did not observe the rules of reciprocity—which we always imagine that God invented—if he did not take revenge on his persecutors but offered us a Counselor for our defense, if by his forgiveness he showed us a way out of the mimetic contagion that has engulfed the world in violence, there is reason enough to speak of the gospel not as myth but as news—good news, indeed.

Diana Culbertson
Director of Religious Studies
Kent State University
Kent, OH

René Girard's explanation of Satan as *scandalon*, stumbling block, that is to say, as both rival and obstacle for worldly desires that others model for us, leaves barely a phenomenological stone unturned. It explains mountains and molehills of satanic lore within Scripture and way beyond it, down to our present sacrificial confusion about evil in the world and all those besides ourselves whom we like to blame it on. Girard's strictly anthropological interpretation here exhibits the appeal of his work to believers and nonbelievers alike, as it demonstrates an internal coherence that allows researchers to organize a mass of anthropological, literary, and historical data in meaningful patterns that illuminate the sacrificial and scapegoating dynamics of all-too-human violence.

This limpidity is not in evidence, however, in Girard's account of prophetic and apostolic revelation as it concerns the anomalous resistance of a few to the unanimous contagion of victimization, a courage which he rather too abruptly assigns to "divine grace." You can explain anything you wish or leave unexplained anything you cannot with such a notion as that, which is to say that ultimate-

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ly you explain nothing in a way that is logically compelling. But it is too soon to preach to the choir, for there is no need at this point to forfeit claims to strictly anthropological reasoning. In sum, such precipitate recourse to divine grace begs the question of intelligibility just where the implications of Girard's own mimetic analysis open up still broader and clearer channels of communication between theology and science, between faith and human experience. . . .

Andrew J. McKenna
Department of Modern
Languages and Literatures
Loyola University
Chicago, IL

Together with its method, what recommends René Girard's scriptural deconstruction is its startling result: The primary thesis of Enlightenment fundamentalism—the thesis that the four Gospels, in essence, belong to the domain of mythology—is turned upside down. Professor Girard's point is not simply that the Bible is irreducible to myth; his point is that the Bible, by any just assessment, must be credited with a prodigious feat: forever destroying the credibility of mythological representations. . . .

I think Professor Girard's theory is on the right track, but where he claims that the Gospels are indispensable to the "purely anthropological revelation of unanimous victimage," I would distinguish absolute indispensability from conditional indispensability, and argue that the Gospels are not absolutely indispensable to the task of decoding myths as representations that falsely impute guilt to sacrificial victims. . . .

1. The fact that the Passion supremely illuminates the victimage mechanism does not render it absolutely indispensable to the revelation of that mechanism. The revelation of "magico-sacrificial" killing *as idolatrous* is already contained in the providential history of the people of Moses (the second commandment):. "You shall not bow down to [idols] or serve them." As E. P. Sanders has pointed out, the precise meaning of the word "serve" in Judaism and in other ancient religions is: "serve by sacrificing to"; serve, then, refers to "magico-sacrificial" killing or idolatrous killing.

2. If the Gospels are not absolutely indispensable to the revelation of the kind of all-against-one victimization that is hidden by mythology, then are the Gospels conditionally indispensable to such revelation? If the condition is as daunting as the moral conversion of the Gentile nations, then the answer is Yes.

At the same time, as Franz Rosenzweig discerned in *Star of Redemption* (1930), "the nations within the church" remain noticeably vulnerable to mimetic crisis. Significantly, Rosenzweig uses the same terminology that Girard will later use. . . . Rosenzweig describes the Jewish people as the eternal beginning of the "ultimate community" of nation-states.

3. If the Gospels are indispensable for overcoming mimetic conflict between nation-states, but not absolutely indispensable for discrediting the mythic fatality that enshrouds that conflict, then what is the relation between Girard's demythologizing revelation and Revelation proper? . . .

Girard describes his deconstructive revelation as purely anthropological, but I submit that it is only materially anthropological; formally, it is theological. Indeed, exposing mythic violence is a proximate, secondary reason why God decreed the Incarnation. . . .

John F. Maguire
Natural Law Jurisprudence Center
Berkeley, CA

René Girard replies:

I agree with Diana Culbertson when she defines what is still missing from the "mimetic reading": the very heart of the Gospels, their soteriological mystery. There is and there will always be much more to say, and she hints at it better than I can in the last two beautiful paragraphs of her letter.

I thank Andrew McKenna for his positive reading of my essay. It is true that much more needs to be said regarding the apostolic revelation, in continuity with what he calls my phenomenology of Satan and the mimetic crowd, but there was no room to say it in a short essay, and I wanted to show that my reordering does not exclude but ultimately demands an intervention of divine grace. Ultimately, there cannot be any human explanation for the fact that the Gospels reveal so much about the true God as well as about the false ones. It is often said that my reading is purely anthropological. What I attempt to show is that the anthropological and the theological cannot do without each other, which is, after all, what the dogma of the Incarnation is about.

John Maguire perfectly defines what is, in my view, the chief value of deciphering mythology through the Gospels. This process refutes the modern tendency to reduce Christianity to another example of mythology. It shows that resemblances between the two are not due to contamination of the first by the second: they are the absolute prerequisite for the Christian deconstruction of mythology.

Since the myth of a mythical Christianity is the chief obstacle to faith in our world, its refutation is a most urgent task, and, to be convincing, it must be conducted independently from all theological presuppositions, as a purely anthropological and rational operation that deals with the Gospels exactly as if they *could* be what skeptics tell us they are, a more ethically refined myth perhaps, but a myth nevertheless, a myth just like any other. If theology were resorted to, the whole demonstration would become pointless from an apologetic point of view. Many Christians are less quick in understanding this than non-Christians. They automatically assume, wrongly I hope, that there is something "unorthodox" in my approach. I see it myself as a classical synthesis of faith and understanding, one that respects the relative autonomy of human reason.

Ultimately, I agree with Mr. Maguire that the deconstruction of mythology is not the most important aspect of the Judaic and Christian revelation, but is intrinsic to it.

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Can Abortion Be Restricted?

Your April issue carried two pieces dealing with the feasibility of legally restricting abortion, Robert P. George and Ramesh Ponnuru's "The New Abortion Debate" and a While We're At It piece on the reissuing of Marvin Olasky's *Abortion Rites: A Social History of Abortion in America*. Each discussion erred in diagnosing the main problem with restricting abortion through force of law.

The main problem is not in fashioning palatable penalties for the abortionist. He should not ordinarily be sent to prison or fined. He should be sentenced to full-time community service in institutions for the disadvantaged, handicapped, and the ill. Should he resist, the lie will have been put to his rhetoric of humanitarianism. How much sympathy will he enjoy when he is sent to a minimum security prison because he would not show up at the foster facility or rehab center or nursing home?

The real problem is that there are not likely to be a whole bunch of abortionists as we usually envision them. For we are rapidly moving into the era where the abortifacient will render the abortionist obsolete. Pharmacological "advances" and discoveries, e.g., RU-486 and tests showing the abortifacient effect of combining drugs used for other purposes, will be what frustrate the law in protecting the unborn. We cannot control the flow of illicit drugs that many citizens regularly ingest for mere recreation. How much more difficult will it be to ban substances that a sizable portion of the population views as life-salvaging for the unfortunate woman finding herself with an unwanted pregnancy?

Proponents of prohibiting abortion will have to tackle this problem head-on. More, since abortifacients will most often be employed in the initial stage of pregnancy, such proponents will have to wrestle with questions about the actual personhood of the conceptus at the earliest points of gestation.

Kevin M. Doyle
South Nyack, NY

The editors reply:

Regarding the prospective changes to be wrought by RU-486 and other "advances," readers may want to consult Bernard Nathanson's "The Abortion Cocktail" (January).

Contra Dulles

In his enumeration of the obstacles to evangelization in the Catholic Church, Father Avery Dulles erected one of mountainous proportions by his own plain statements ("Evangelizing Theology," March). This barrier, which it seems to me is the most important of all the modern enemies of evangelization—since it sets itself up against and directly attacks the historic Christian standpoint and not merely secular philosophies—appears to have established a near universal domination in late-twentieth-century Catholic theology and is supported by the current Pope in his book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. It is, namely, the denial of the historic Catholic doctrine of the eternal damnation of unbelievers. Popular as this denial may be, it can hardly be claimed to represent historic, orthodox, Catholic Christianity, and I found it disturbing to read Fr. Dulles' statement that the Pauline doctrine of salvation "does not require one to hold that all unevangelized peoples are consigned to eternal damnation. Indeed, the Catholic Church has repeatedly proclaimed that God puts salvation within the reach of everyone. But the way in which people can be saved without hearing the gospel remains God's secret." . . .

In the writings of Origen in the third century we encounter the hopeful expectation that in the world to come, and following millions of years of purgatorial cleansing and angelical instruction, it may turn out that unbelievers and perhaps even fallen angels and Satan himself will repent and be restored to a state of grace. The modern universalists admire Origen, but they seldom understand him rightly. What they almost always ignore is that for Origen the postulated restoration was in the first place uncertain and in the second place bi-directional: on the one hand he hopes for Satan's restoration to holiness in the coming age, but on the other hand his doctrine of the will's intrinsic freedom forces him to concede that good angels and believers may in the future age apostatize and land themselves in hell.

Origen was not even unambiguous in his views, since in his commentary on Romans he explicitly denies the possibility of Satan's future restoration and in *Peri Archon* he suggests that the hoped for restoration will fail, a situation which will lead God to recreate the universe, reassign human souls to bodies, and begin the salvation process all over again. What I want to point out here, however, is that Origen cannot be enlisted as a catholic voice denying the eternal damnation of unbelievers, assuming Fr. Dulles was thinking of him in his article, since for Origen there was no question of the damnation of unbelievers and of the unevangelized but some question of the duration and finality of this damnation.

After Origen I'm not sure who Fr. Dulles can recruit in support of his views that the unevangelized will be mysteriously saved by participation in the Logos, seeing that Origen's speculations were condemned as heretical and poisonous by Saint Jerome and later in an official ecumenical council. . . .

(The Rev.) Tom Scheck
Free Evangelical Church
Leipzig, Germany

I demur to the notion of Father Avery Dulles cited in "Obeying in Order to Understand" (Public Square, April) that fidelity to the Church's teaching that only men may be ordained to the priesthood requires as a major task of the Church the full involvement of women in the Church's life. Before that is even considered, a major task of the Church should be to set forth clearly its teaching on the relation and complementarity of the sexes and distinguish it from contemporary secular feminism. One often gets the impression from churchmen, reacting to an agenda set by contemporary feminism, that they are apologetic about the Church's teaching, as they point to the quantity of

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women in the sanctuary, seminary, and church bureaucracy. Moreover, in the rush to assure the world that the Church really values women, a monumental crisis is being ignored: that of men and fathers.

Men are staying away from the Church in droves, identifying religious leadership in family and church with women's work. The contemporary feminist portrait of the patriarchal church is largely a myth. Consider these statistics: more than 85 percent of those involved in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are women; 80 percent of Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) teachers are women; 80 percent of prayer group members are women; 70 percent of Bible study participants are women; 58 percent of those identified as the most influential leaders in parish life are women; 60 percent of persons involved with youth ministry are women.

The dearth of male religious leadership and participation in church life is having devastating consequences on vocations and family life. The priesthood is often not seen as a manly vocation. Fatherhood is not seen involving religious commitment or leadership. The Church's response to the world about its teaching on the priesthood and on men and women cannot be determined by journalists and secular feminism, which I am afraid is largely the case today.

(The Rev.) Leonard F. Villa
St. Eugene's Church
Yonkers, NY

Avery Dulles replies:

It has been the firm teaching of the Catholic Church since the struggles against Jansenism in the seventeenth century that God does not withhold from anyone the grace needed for salvation. Pius IX in several documents asserted that non-Christians living in invincible ignorance of the true faith could obtain eternal life, provided that they cooperated with the grace given to them. The Holy Office under Pius XII, clarifying this point, insisted that no one could be saved without supernatural faith, which could, however, be merely implicit. Vatican Council II asserted in a number of texts that every human being can have faith and can be associated in a saving way with the mystery of Christ. John Paul II has picked up from Vatican II the idea that "seeds of the Word" are present in the great religions of the world.

The idea of "seeds of the Word" is not new. It comes into Christian tradition even before Origen. Justin Martyr, who spoke of the "seminal word" (*logos spermatikos*), taught that Christ is "the Word of whom every race of people were partakers" and that "those who live reasonably are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists." Clement of Alexandria, inspired by the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, declared: "The word is not hidden from any; He is a universal light; He shines upon all human beings."

On the basis of texts such as these it is possible to surmise that by accepting the illumination of the Logos, the unevangelized may have sufficient faith to attain eternal life. But it is important to keep in mind that the universal presence of the Logos is intended to be a preparation for the gospel, which discloses Jesus Christ as the only Savior.

In the contested passage concerning women in the Church, I was practically quoting John Paul II's address of September 3, 1995. If Father Villa has a quarrel with me, he must have one with the Pope as well. Fr. Villa is of course correct in what he says about the dominance of women in certain ministries, such as health care and religious education, particularly on the parish level. But women are conspicuously absent in policy-making positions at the higher levels of Church administration. Although the complementarity of the sexes must be respected, I do not see it as justifying the dearth of either male or female leadership, whether on the local or on the universal level.

In Defense of Opus Dei

It is surprising that your Briefly Noted on Joan Estruch's book (*Saints and Sinners: Opus Dei and Its Paradoxes*, March) gives such uncritical acceptance to a deconstructionist analysis of Opus Dei. . . .

When a deconstructionist sociologist treats texts dealing with Christian faith and practice, the results will necessarily be altogether corrosive, particularly if he feels obliged to take a scholarly stance that excludes any sympathy for ultimate truth. Estruch subjects the writings of Blessed Josemaria Escriva and his followers to this kind of "objective" analysis. His results, often couched in cynical irony, range from the silly to the outrageous. Your review seems to buy into much of this when it repeats Estruch's charge that Escriva's "hagiographers" indulged in "excesses—if not outright prevarications."

Religious truth simply is not relevant to Estruch's deconstructionist method. It is inevitable that his almost endless and often rarefied juggling of multiple readings of texts

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leads to an unrelenting assault on an institution whose fundamental purposes have already been discounted. To assess Opus Dei in this way is akin to analyzing what goes on in a basketball game while disregarding the aim of the game itself.

Your review at least raises some suspicions about the book. It terms it "peculiar" and says the author "gets a bit hysterical" when discussing the relationship between Opus Dei and Pope John Paul II. Yet for all that, it accepts a number of Estruch's claims about the Prelature, even counting them "valuable contributions."

Of course central to Estruch's method would be the allegation that the Prelature is *not* what the members or the Church say it is. Estruch makes this point with the assertion that Opus Dei has changed its purpose over the years and was really founded in 1939, not 1928 as the founder had often repeated and as the Catholic Church in fact solemnly proclaimed. These charges are patently untrue—and offered without a shred of hard evidence.

The book may add little to the study of Max Weber's theories about capitalism and the Protestant ethic, as your review concludes. But contrary to what the review says, it is doubtful that the book will be "of interest" for any understanding of Opus Dei. Nearly everything it says about the Prelature is a caricature.

William A. Schmitt
Office of Communications
Opus Dei
New Rochelle, NY

Correction:
Derek S. Jeffreys of Chicago complains that his letter in the May issue refers to "the Montgomery bus boycott of 1965." He wrote, and we know, that the Montgomery bus boycott was in 1956. Sorry. 1969 has been a hard year for our proofreaders.

In the Beginning

The sun was fierce that day,
relentless even in its shadow. Heat
clung to the walls and troubled
the air like a presence almost seen.

She bent above the shallow bowl,
pressing on the crush of wheat,
grinding each stubborn hull beneath
her clenched tool. Sweat trickled
like a steady itch along her scalp.

She paused, still gripping the pestle,
and lifted her head back wearily.
An oven . . . the room was an oven,
and she, the crumble of grain.

But now a sudden silence—
no babble from the street,
no wailing of the neighbor's child,
no buzz of flies, no pounding hammer,
or slam and slide of board on board;

only a pounding along the flat plane
of her temples. It was as if
a summer storm had gathered
in the suffocation of this room—
had caught her unaware, uncovered,
and hung in wait above her,
pressing, pressing down . . .

And into the heat a cold fire centered,
like a gathering of lightning unreleased.
Slowly she stood, pestle clutched tightly.
Fear whipped down her back,
encircling her, etching through the
tightness of her skin,
gripping across her belly like an omen.

"MARY!" That was all.

She turned with a sudden pivot,
dropping her useless tool;
and Love spoke softly, from the gathering
of shadows and of heat, and from the
steady glowing of the cool Fire.

As on the First Day, so it was . . .
As in the Beginning, so it was . . .

Judith Deem Dupree

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This Time

When Insults No Longer Insult

James Nuechterlein

Some years ago I participated in an academic conference whose main attraction was the late Allan Bloom, author of *The Closing of the American Mind*. Over the several days of the conference, Bloom, as spirited and engaging a performer off platform as on, held the spotlight. He was a brilliant and contradictory presence—outrageously outspoken, yet almost morbidly sensitive to criticism—and he put on a show that, if sometimes unsettling, was always dazzling.

The conference had a curious aftermath. Months after it ended, I received an agitated phone call from another of the participants. He had heard from several sources, he said, that in the course of the conference Bloom had admitted to being a racist. He was calling me because the purported confession had occurred at a dinner where Bloom and I had sat side by side. Indeed, Bloom had reportedly made the confession to me.

My first reaction was baffled denial. Nothing of the sort had happened, I said. This was a total fabrication, and those advancing it should be called to account. As I mentally reconstructed the conversation of the evening, however, I slowly came to realize how the misunderstanding had developed.

In a long evening of talk, Bloom had touched on various aspects of his academic career, including his days at Cornell during the black power uprising in the sixties. Bloom recounted that he had opposed the radicals and their demands, and that the students had, quite predictably, accused him of racism. "And of course," I interjected, "they were right." By which I meant, in the verbal shorthand that our prior conversation had set up, that from the perspective of those who equated opposition to black radicalism with racism, he was guilty as charged. "Of course," he replied. So it was that those who had missed (or misconstrued) the shorthand heard the conversation as Bloom's confession that he was, in fact, a racist.

Misunderstandings aside, little has changed in the years since. Racism is still what black activists define it to be. Just recently, for example, the Reverend Jesse Jackson complained of a "kind of anti-black mania, a kind of white riot" sweeping the nation. It was not just Klansmen in white sheets spreading racial hatred, he said, but also legislators "in blue suits who use thinly coded, veiled race signals when they say 'welfare' and 'crime' and 'three strikes' and 'end affirmative action.'" There it is: to be concerned with welfare, crime, or quotas is to be a racist. Of course.

Comments like Jackson's fall into the category of argument by insult. They are meant not to advance public discussion but to end it. They are conversation-stoppers, forms of moral blackmail. Those who dissent from the views of the civil rights establishment are not just wrong but immoral. White sheets or blue suits, Klansmen or critics of quotas—they are all alike and all categorically to be dismissed by right-thinking folk. Only the politically orthodox qualify for entry into the conversation. Why talk to bigots?

The political uses of argument by insult are difficult to resist, and they now extend well beyond the boundaries of race. Take the curious case of the term "homophobia," a word now commonly applied to those who in any way or for whatever reason find homosexual behavior objectionable or even problematic.

People with phobias, it is generally understood, are people with problems. The dictionary describes the term as "an exaggerated, usually inexplicable and illogical fear of a particular object or group of objects." To be phobic is to be sick, in need of treatment. Homophobia, in this sense, is worse than racism: it compounds immorality with pathology.

The only problem with the term is that we have in it an epithet in search of a condition. Beyond its ideological uses, it does not truly exist. It will be found nowhere in the clinical lexicon. There are, it is true, people with exaggerated fear of or aversion to homosexuals, but these are not today the people to whom the term primarily applies. A homophobe, in current usage, is anyone who objects to the agenda of the gay rights community. Homophobes are people who vote against gay rights ordinances and who resist recognition—legal or moral—of same-sex marriage.

It is all quite remarkable. Until very recently, opposition to homosexuality has been an all but universal social norm. Within a single generation, that norm has been turned on its head. It is now not homosexual behavior that needs to be defended or explained, but rather objection to such behavior. Opposition to homosexuality has become a suspect moral category: thus the now automatic grouping of "homophobia" with racism and sexism (the last another term so elastic in its application as to become meaningless).

In this view, there is no significant distinction to be made between the attitudes, on the one hand, of philosophers, psychologists, and theologians who regard homosexual practice as an objective disorder and, on the other hand, of gangs of skinheads eagerly

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in search of gays to bash. It is all—if at varying levels of sophistication—bigotry and prejudice, and it follows that decent people will have nothing to do with any of it.

America's religious communities have a particular stake in seeing that the conversation-stoppers not be allowed to set the terms of discussion on this matter. Jews and Christians alike believe that there is a divinely ordained right order of things, and that our sexuality finds appropriate expression within that order in monogamous heterosexual unions. It takes no extraordinary perception to see that God created men and women for each other. Indeed, it requires a remarkable capacity for denial of the obvious to get around that intent. Homosexuals have the right to expect of the rest of us decent and respectful treatment as human beings and citizens. They have no right to insist that we surrender our fundamental moral beliefs in order that they might feel comfortable with their sexual behavior.

Moral conversation in America has been corrupted virtually beyond recognition. People raised to consider the term "racist" a searing moral judgment—and for whom "homophobe" had no meaning at all (the dictionary lists its first usage in 1969)—find themselves in a world of moral jabberwocky where words mean whatever those hurling them at ideological opponents claim they mean. You are a bigot if Jesse Jackson says so and a homophobe if you think that gay and straight are not morally fungible conditions.

When words lose coherent meaning, they also lose their power to shame. "Racism," "sexism," and "homophobia" have become such words. Labels that should horrify are simply shrugged off: if I am a racist merely by virtue of thinking that busing and quotas are bad ideas, so be it.

You know you are in a culture war when you are so morally estranged from your adversary that he has lost the capacity to insult you. FT

> The barbarian need not appear in bearskins with a club in hand. He may wear a Brooks Brothers suit and carry a ball-point pen with which to write his advertising copy. In fact, even beneath the academic gown there may lurk a child of the wilderness, untutored in the high tradition of civility, who goes busily and happily about his work, a domesticated and law-abiding man, engaged in the construction of a philosophy to put an end to all philosophy, and thus put an end to the possibility of a vital consensus and to civility itself. This is perennially the work of the barbarian, to undermine rational standards of judgment, to corrupt the inherited intuitive wisdom by which the people have always lived, and to do this not by spreading new beliefs but by creating a climate of doubt and bewilderment in which clarity about the larger aims of life is dimmed and the self-confidence of the people is destroyed, so that finally what you have is the impotent nihilism of the "generation of the third eye," now presently appearing on our university campuses. (One is, I take it, on the brink of impotence and nihilism when one begins to be aware of one's own awareness of what one is doing, saying, thinking. This is the paralysis of all serious thought; it is likewise the destruction of all the spontaneities of love.)
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> —John Courtney Murray, *The Civilization of the Pluralist Society*

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Opinion

Dehumanization Triumphant

Leon R. Kass

Recent efforts to legalize physician-assisted suicide and to establish a constitutional "right to die" are deeply troubling events, morally dubious in themselves, extremely dangerous in their likely consequences. The legalization of physician-assisted suicide, ostensibly a measure enhancing the freedom of dying patients, is in fact a deadly license for physicians to prescribe death, free from outside scrutiny and immune from possible prosecution. The manufacture of a "right to die," ostensibly a gift to those not dying fast enough, is, in fact, the state's abdication of its duty to protect innocent life and its abandonment especially of the old, the weak, and the poor.

The legalization of physician-assisted suicide will pervert the medical profession by transforming the healer of human beings into a technical dispenser of death. For over two millennia the medical ethic, mindful that power to cure is also power to kill, has held as an inviolable rule, "Doctors must not kill." The venerable Hippocratic Oath clearly rules out physician-assisted suicide. Without this taboo, medicine ceases to be a trustworthy and ethical profession; without it, all of us will suffer—yes, more than we suffer now because some of us die too slowly.

The doctor-patient relationship will be damaged. The patient's trust in the doctor's devotion to the patient's best interests will be hard to sustain once doctors can legally prescribe death. Even conscientious physicians will have trouble caring wholeheartedly for patients once death becomes a "therapeutic option." The prohibition against killing patients, medicine's first principle of ethical self-restraint, recognizes that no physician devoted to the benefit of the sick can serve the patient by making him dead. The physician-suicide-assistant or physician-euthanizer is a deadly self-contradiction.

Physician-assisted suicide, once legal, will not stay confined to the terminally ill and mentally competent who freely and knowingly elect it for themselves. Requests will be engineered and choices manipulated by those who control the information, and, manipulation aside, many elderly and incurable people will experience a right to choose death *as their duty* to do so. Moreover, the vast majority of those who are said to "merit" "a humane and dignified death" do not fall in this category and cannot request it for themselves. Persons with mental illness or Alzheimer's disease, deformed infants, and retarded or dying children would thus be denied our new humane "aid-in-dying." But not to worry. The lawyers, encouraged by the cost-containers, will sue to rectify this inequity. Why, they will argue, should the comatose or the demented be denied a right to assisted suicide just because they cannot claim it for themselves? With court-appointed proxy consentors, we will quickly erase the distinction between the right to choose one's own death and the right to request someone else's.

The termination of lives someone else thinks are no longer worth living is now occurring on a large scale in Holland, where assisted suicide and euthanasia have been practiced by physicians for more than a decade, under "safeguards" more stringent than those enacted in the Oregon law. According to the Dutch government's own alarming figures, there are over one thousand cases per year of direct *in*voluntary euthanasia; also 8,100 cases of morphine overdosage intending to terminate life, 61 percent without the patient's consent. Although the guidelines insist that choosing death must be informed and voluntary, over 40 percent of Dutch physicians have performed involuntary euthanasia. As the Dutch have shown, the practice of assisted suicide is in principle unregulable, because it is cloaked in the privacy of the doctor-patient relationship.

Legalizing assisted suicide would mark a drastic change in the social and political order. The state would be surrendering its monopoly on the legal use of lethal force, a monopoly it holds under the social contract, a monopoly it needs if it is to protect innocent life, its first responsibility. It should surprise no one if physicians, once they are exempted from the ban on the private use of lethal force, wind up killing without restraint. Here, by the way, is a *genuine* violation of the Fourteenth Amendment: deprivation of *life* without due process of law.

We must care for the dying, not make them dead. By accepting mortality yet knowing that we will not kill, doctors can focus on enhancing the lives of those who are dying, with relief of pain and discomfort, moral and social support, and, when appropriate, the removal of technical interventions that are merely useless or degrading additions to the burdens of dying—including, frequently, hospitalization itself. Doctors must not intentionally kill, or help to kill, but they may allow a patient to die.

Ceasing medical intervention, allowing nature to take its course, differs fundamentally from assisting suicide and active euthanasia. Not the physician, but the underlying fatal illness becomes the true cause of

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death. More important morally, in ceasing treatment the physician *does not intend the death* of the patient, even if death follows as a result. Rather, he seeks to avoid useless and degrading medical additions to the already sad end of a life. In contrast, in assisted suicide the physician necessarily intends primarily that the patient be made dead.

One cannot exaggerate the importance of the distinction between withholding or withdrawing treatment and directly killing, a distinction foolishly dismissed in the recent Court of Appeals' decisions. Both as a matter of law and as a matter of medical ethics, the right to refuse unwanted medical intervention is properly seen not as part of a right to become dead but rather as part of a *right protecting how we choose to live,* even while we are dying.

Once we refuse the technical fix, physicians and the rest of us can also rise to the occasion: we can learn to act humanly in the presence of finitude. Far more than adequate morphine and the removal of burdensome chemotherapy, the dying need our presence and our encouragement. Withdrawal of human contact, affection, and care is the greatest single cause of the dehumanization of dying. People who care for autonomy and dignity should try to correct this dehumanization of the end of life, instead of giving dehumanization its final triumph by welcoming the desperate good-bye-to-all-that contained in one final plea for poison. Not the alleged humaneness of an elixir of death, but the humanness of connected living-while-dying is what medicine—and the rest of us—most owe the dying. The treatment of choice is and always will be company and care.

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To Be Citizens Again

William A. Schambra

I would like to introduce you to Lessie Handy. Several years ago, Ms. Handy moved from Houston to Milwaukee, to work as a secretary and receptionist. But she noted that very few people in her office shared her cultural interests—"no one to discuss James Brown with," as she puts it. When she learned that few applicants for even entry-level clerical jobs had the skills and demeanor needed in a modern office, she prayed that God would send someone to provide that sort of training. But God responded, "It's up to you, Lessie."

And so Lessie borrowed $5,000 from her godmother, set up her own nonprofit institute in a run-down office building in inner city Milwaukee, and started to teach her neighbors computer basics and personal office skills. Today, two years later, Lessie has trained and placed over 200 individuals in jobs, 150 of whom are former AFDC mothers.

Lessie Handy is the walking, breathing embodiment of the uniquely American citizen that Alexis de Tocqueville discovered here more than 150 years ago. When Americans confront a problem, he noted, they don't fold their arms and wait for government to solve it. Instead, they get together with their neighbors, form an association—a "mediating structure"—and tackle it themselves.

And so it was for much of American history. Within our mediating structures—our extended families, churches, neighborhoods, and voluntary associations—we erected our institutions, cared for our elderly, taught our children competence and character, and surrounded ourselves with a rich moral atmosphere that reflected and reinforced our deepest ethical and spiritual principles.

Mediating structures were built by, and in turn built, genuine citizens—citizens who not only participated fully in making the critical decisions of everyday public life, but who also carried out those decisions in the sweat of their own brow. Citizens did not *influence* social policy. They *were* social policy.

Today, we seldom speak about the citizen-building function of mediating structures. At least since the War on Poverty in the 1960s, we focus instead on their utility as "service providers," as ways of extending publicly funded therapeutic services to ever larger clienteles, without expanding government payrolls. But because government increasingly funds and regulates mediating structures, they have come to resemble nothing so much as the very government programs they were meant to outperform and replace. They, too, have become top-down, bureaucratic structures, staffed by credentialed professionals and experts, delivering commodified packages of services to passive, helpless clients—and lobbying diligently to keep their public funding streams flowing.

As John McKnight points out, the service state does not build—because it does not need—active, self-governing citizens. Indeed, such people only get in the way. All the service state needs is docile taxpayers to write checks, docile clients to receive the services those checks pay for, and—the only active ingredient—the therapeutic elite itself, which guards

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jealously its claim on the taxpayers' purses and its clients' souls. Insofar as many of our nation's mediating structures have become mere instruments of the social-service state, they themselves are today deeply and profoundly corrupt—as much a part of the problem as the solution in this epoch of the faltering welfare system.

Some commentators today have noted that citizens are increasingly disinclined to contribute to or volunteer for such organizations. Ironically, in decrying the decline of civic spirit, they blame *citizens*, not the *organizations* that prefer government grants to private charity and that can barely conceal their contempt for bumbling, amateurish volunteers.

The central task now for those of us who believe in mediating structures is to labor for fundamental reform of mediating structures themselves. We must cultivate vigorously those structures that are citizen-builders—rather than service-providers—rooted in the neighborhood, restoring it from the inside, reflecting and preserving its values.

This means a massive assault on the credentialing and regulatory barriers that suppress citizen-building, grassroots initiatives—barriers more often than not erected by professional service-providers chiefly to protect their prerogatives. It means directing financial support, both private and public, to initiatives that work from the bottom up, rather than the top down. It means welcoming to the struggle against poverty those who preach God's soul-transforming Word, not just those who have logged the necessary hours in schools of social work.

An openness to mediating structures born of faith would be nothing more than a return to the originally religious character of most of our society's mediating structures. And it could make mediating structures, not political parties or PACs, the preferred vehicle for the spiritual stirring that some call America's Fourth Great Awakening.

Christians are surely not called to support a welfare state that has so manifestly hurt the poor. Nor are they called to cast their ballots according to some "Christian scorecard." But they *are* called by the story of the Good Samaritan to suffer with and minister to the broken of this world—directly, immediately, personally, not through paid professional substitutes.

That sort of commitment can be effectively expressed and facilitated only in a society rich in mediating structures. But this is a new kind of "mediating"—not mediating *vertically*, between individual and state, as in the original Berger-Neuhaus formulation, but mediating *horizontally*, between suburb and inner city, between the wealthy and the poor.

What is required is a radical transformation in the way we think about mediating structures. In the future, that term must bring to mind not some gleaming, downtown high-rise social services agency. What comes to mind, rather, must be something like Lessie Handy's cramped offices in Milwaukee's inner city. The downtown agency has none of the vitality of American citizenship. Ms. Handy's office is a little frayed around the edges—the donated furniture tries bravely to conceal the electrical tape mending the threadbare carpeting—but it throbs with the energy and zeal that Tocqueville described as the glory of America.

If we are to be once again a nation of citizens, rather than a nation of resentful taxpayers, arrogant service providers, and passive clients, this rethinking must become the mediating structures agenda for the *next* twenty years.

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The Courts: Order in the Classroom

Bruce C. Hafen and Jonathan O. Hafen

There has been in recent years a surprisingly broad but little noticed shift in judicial thinking about public schools—an affirmation of schools' right to define the intellectual and moral content of education. After a quarter century of declining support for public education, this shift signals an important trend that may allow schools to take much stronger stands in teaching their students.

The late 1960s were a time of unprecedented turbulence in American schools. The student revolts that began at Berkeley in 1964 spread swiftly on college campuses, and while the effect on secondary schools was less visible, it was no less profound. Radical critics, shaking public confidence in traditional teaching, portrayed schools as the enemy of true learning and the instrument of social control. The influential British educator A. S. Neill argued that the child is "innately wise and realistic. If left to himself without adult suggestion of any kind, he will develop as far as he is capable of developing." Some schools took this

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notion to the point that a cartoon from the early 1970s showed a boy lamenting, "Do we have to do what *we* want to again today, teacher?"

In the midst of this upheaval, the courts began to recognize a new concept of constitutional rights for students. In 1969 the Supreme Court heard *Tinker v. Des Moines School District.* Examining the discipline imposed on a group of Iowa children who wore black armbands to protest the war in Vietnam, the Court concluded that the school had violated the students' constitutional right of free speech. In what became a much-quoted phrase, the Court announced that students do not shed their constitutional rights at the schoolhouse gate. The only guideline given administrators in determining the boundaries of student expression was the test of whether the expression manifestly disrupted the conduct of school.

In the years that followed, both the courts and the schools struggled through an erosion of confidence in schools' educational authority. By the 1980s, researchers had begun to note serious declines in students' academic achievement. Finding that students in private schools generally perform better by about two grade levels than students in public schools, James Coleman concluded in 1982 that a primary cause of academic deterioration in public schools was "a fundamental change in the relation of the school to the student." Where schools had once been "a trustee for parental authority," by the 1970s they had relinquished their authority.

Meanwhile, lower courts were interpreting *Tinker* in ways that further undermined school authority. In *Fraser v. Bethel School District,* where a Seattle high school student delivered a vulgar speech to a student assembly, a federal appeals court concluded that the school should not have disciplined the student. In *Kuhlmeier v. Hazelwood School District,* where a St. Louis administrator pulled two questionable stories from a high school's official newspaper, a federal appeals court held that administrators may not suppress student publications unless the stories would actually disrupt educational activities or harm others so seriously that the school would probably lose a lawsuit for invasion of privacy.

The surprise came when *Fraser* and *Hazelwood* reached the Supreme Court in 1986 and 1988, and the Court reversed them both. "The process of educating our youth for citizenship in public schools," the Court explained in *Fraser,* "is not confined to books, the curriculum, and the civics class." Schools should teach "the habits and manners of civility as values conducive to happiness and indispensable to the practice of self government." In *Hazelwood,* the Court distinguished the private, passive wearing of armbands in *Tinker* from expression in a school-sponsored activity. When activities imply school sponsorship, schools may regulate student expression within reasonable limits. "The education of the nation's youth," the *Hazelwood* Court declared, "is primarily the responsibility of parents, teachers, and state and local school officials, and not of federal judges."

These decisions were not popular with the media (perhaps because they seemed to restrict free speech), and many legal scholars have tried to interpret them narrowly in order to preserve the priority of speech rights. Perhaps for these reasons, the lower courts' application of *Fraser* and *Hazelwood* has not attracted much attention. But it deserves to, for the course of cases since 1988 offers parents and administrators new confidence in their ability to educate their children.

One group of cases has applied the Court's reasoning that while schools must "tolerate" student expressions, they need not "promote" them with school-sponsored forums. Just after a Nevada federal court held that a school newspaper was obliged to accept advertisements from Planned Parenthood, the Supreme Court handed down *Hazelwood,* and the Nevada court withdrew its earlier opinion, relying on *Hazelwood*'s theory that a school may determine the content of official publications. An appeals court in Florida in 1989 upheld the discontinuance of a humanities textbook which, in the opinion of the school board, contained vulgar and sexually explicit material.

A second group of cases reaffirms the doctrine that schools act in place of parents—*in loco parentis.* By the late 1970s most educators considered the concept as antiquated as the Latin phrase. Yet the Supreme Court itself resurrected the phrase in its 1986 *Fraser* opinion and later affirmed (in a 1995 decision affirming the right of public schools to conduct random drug tests on student athletes) that "for many purposes" public school teachers and administrators "stand *in loco parentis* over children entrusted to them." A 1990 Minnesota case, citing *Hazelwood,* similarly upheld a school's right to discipline students who attended parties at which alcohol was consumed.

A third set of cases since 1988 has extended *Hazelwood* to permit school officials to regulate the expression of faculty members. A 1993 federal case sustained a school's decision not to reappoint a teacher who had inappropriately discussed the abortion of Down's Syndrome babies in class. Another case upheld a school district's right to require its teachers to use the district's reading lists. And in a Colorado case in 1991, a federal court applied the *Hazelwood* standards to sustain a school's decision to reprimand a teacher for making comments during class about the rumored sexual activities of two students. Recognizing the implicit school sponsorship of classroom activities, the court declared that judges should not "interfere with the authority of the school officials to select among alternative forms of discipline. We will protect appropriate constitutional interests [but we] should not and will not run the schools."

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A fourth set of cases has used *Hazelwood* to bolster the authority of schools to regulate student speech in assemblies and graduation ceremonies. In holding that the First Amendment does not give a student the right to make discourteous remarks about school officials, a federal appeals court stated in a 1989 Tennessee case, "Independence of thought and frankness of expression occupy a high place on our scale of values, or ought to, but so too do discipline, courtesy, and respect for authority. . . . Local school officials, better attuned than we to the concerns of the parents [and] taxpayers who employ them, must obviously be accorded wide latitude. . . . We may disagree with the choices, but unless they are beyond the constitutional pale we have no warrant to interfere with them."

Hazelwood's principles are still subject to important limits. A few states, including California, have enacted laws allowing students editorial control over school newspapers. The rules from *Tinker* still require schools to tolerate personal speech, and students' rights to wear campaign buttons or distribute written materials have been upheld when the expression is not manifestly disruptive. In controversies over homosexual clubs in Utah schools, the courts are still sorting out the connection between *Hazelwood* and the Equal Access Act of 1984. The Supreme Court in 1990 cited *Hazelwood* for the proposition that "schools and school districts retain a significant measure of authority over the type of officially recognized activities in which their students participate," but the 1984 law arguably requires that if a school opens its facilities to some unofficial student groups, the school may need to accommodate all student groups.

Among *Hazelwood*'s most important results, the Court has removed the bias against institutional authority that required schools to justify their functions as though they were necessary evils rather than agencies of enlightenment. The over-emphasis on constitutional issues in educational law during the 1970s and 1980s created an exaggerated concern with what schools may not do, without clarifying what they may do. First Amendment doctrine is not the primary explanation of why schools exist, and our ability to educate children went into serious decline while, in the years before *Hazelwood*, courts and educators assumed that it was. The vision of *Fraser* and *Hazelwood* that schools should teach "the habits and manners of civility" and other "shared values of a civilized order" reaffirms the broad state authority and responsibility on which public schools have always drawn to teach both personal autonomy and social responsibility. The judicial breakthrough that began in 1986 and 1988 represents a much needed call to restore our original understanding about the duties, responsibilities, and authority of public schools.

Now the schools, with public support, can respond to this opportunity by developing within our young people the intellectual values and skills the First Amendment was designed to protect. To do so, teachers have to intervene constructively in children's lives, and students must be protected against possible abuses. But unless schools exert enough authority to employ sound educational judgments, little serious education is possible. The courts have not somehow licensed authoritarianism; they have merely recognized that educators, not judges, are best able to determine for children what forms of education will develop mind and character. The courts have finally recognized that the First Amendment is best preserved—is only preserved—when the schools are free to educate.

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What's Wrong with Evangelical Theology?

Peter J. Leithart

In his book *No Place for Truth*, David Wells tells a tale of two declines—the first of which occurred in Protestant liberalism. What began as an effort to commend Christianity to its despisers ended with the loss of everything distinctively Christian. In the Kantian intellectual universe in which liberalism found itself, the "script for study is human experience, not the teaching of the Bible or, for that matter, of the Church." The academy entrenched this experiential emphasis with the relocation of religion into the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and anthropology, a relocation that established "a bias in favor of the sort of Liberalism that Schleiermacher argued for (which seeks the disclosure of God *within* human experience) and a bias against classical orthodoxy (which builds on revelation the ultimate source of which is *outside* human experience)." Liberalism diluted and ultimately excluded confession from academic religious studies.

The focus of Wells' lamentation, however, is the parallel process taking place within evangelicalism, which is now, like liberalism before it, drinking from the trough of modernity, with similar results. Evangelicals entered the mainstream of American life during the late 1970s and "almost immediately" lost their ability to define themselves theologically.

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Modernity's separation of public and private has limited evangelicals' beliefs "to matters of private experience, increasingly shorn of their distinctive worldview, and increasingly withdrawn from what was external and public." Ultimately, "being evangelical has come to mean simply that one has had a certain kind of religious experience that gives color to the private aspects of daily life but in which few identifiable theological elements can be discerned or, as it turns out, are necessary." The theological wheel has turned again in the same circle: "Evangelicals, no less than the Liberals before them whom they have always berated, have now abandoned doctrine in favor of 'life.'"

Wells find this surprising, given the fact that evangelicals have always defined themselves as a "doctrinal people." On reflection, the real surprise is that it has not happened sooner, for his criticisms cut more deeply than Wells seems to realize. Evangelicalism is, after all, often defined as a branch of Christianity that gives particular emphasis to certain aspects of Christian experience: spiritual rebirth, conversion, and a personal relationship to Christ. Spend a little time among evangelicals, and you are sure to learn about people who believe all the right doctrine but are not "real"—which is to say, born-again—Christians. Long before neo-evangelicalism, long before the rise of the Christian right, long before the "Toronto blessing," revivalism gave American Protestantism its distinctive experiential shape, as wave after wave of anti-intellectual New School, New Light, and New Whatever movements were accepted and, paradoxically, accorded theological legitimation.

Wells notes that evangelicals are drawing "increasingly injurious" conclusions from the appropriate emphasis on a believer's personal relationship with Christ: "They have proceeded to seek assurance of faith not in terms of the objective truthfulness of the biblical teaching but in terms of the efficacy of its subjective experience." Not only in the use of testimonies but in hymnody as well, evangelicalism is "changing direction to reflect this experience-centered focus." To anyone who has sung nineteenth-century revival hymns with their sentimental lyrics set to syrupy melodies, however, it is scarcely credible that these represent recent developments.

At certain moments in his analysis, Wells himself seems to half-doubt his tragic narrative. He wonders "whether there ever was a theological structure that evangelicals commonly held and that held them together in a common world of belief." A good question, to which there is at least prima facie evidence of a negative answer: What theological structure was shared by, say, J. Gresham Machen and Billy Sunday?

The current state of evangelicalism, as well as program for the future, may be inferred from the typology outlined in George Lindbeck's *The Nature of Doctrine*. Though Lindbeck's book has to do with *theories* of religion and doctrine, his typology can be used to assess the contours and self-understandings of various religious communities and traditions. And, though it doubtless violates Lindbeck's thoroughly descriptive intentions, his framework may be deployed in a prescriptive manner. Lindbeck discusses the cognitivist model, in which doctrines are considered as propositional first-order truth claims, and the expressivist model, which treats doctrines as more or less arbitrary symbolizations of religious feeling and experience. While liberalism was self-consciously formulated in the second mode, evangelicalism oscillates between the two—emphasizing assent to propositional truth one moment, then insisting on personal experience of the new birth as a (perhaps *the*) central reality of Christianity.

Evangelicalism, however, has little sense of the "cultural-linguistic" dimension of Christianity, Lindbeck's third model and the one he adopts as the framework for his essay in postliberal theology. In this approach, religion is not merely a system of propositions nor a symbolic expression of natural and universal religious experience; religion is instead a comprehensive interpretive scheme, embodied in narrative and ritual, which structures human experience and thought. From this viewpoint, Christianity is indeed seen as a "life," but as a communal life that includes not only a system of ritual and worship and a way of living, but also a way of speaking and thinking.

Wells' justified concerns about the place of theology in evangelical life would not be ignored in such an approach. Theology composed in a cultural-linguistic key need not adopt Lindbeck's reductive "rule theory" of doctrine, his idea that doctrine functions as a grammar that regulates a community's speech but makes no direct ontological claims. Doctrine and theology can take a very high profile in a cultural-linguistic approach, but doctrine would not be the sole mark of true Christianity. An evangelical understanding of theology and church life in a cultural-linguistic mode could avoid the intellectualist extreme of a cognitive approach as well as the irrationalist extreme of the expressivist model.

A cultural-linguistic conception of Christianity highlights the need for evangelical sacramental and liturgical theology. Evangelicals well understand how doctrines and moral standards shape and define a community, but their instinctive anti-ritualism leaves them bereft of the theological tools required for understanding how rites mold, sustain, and nourish the Church. Evangelicals typically examine ritual only for enhancing individual experience. At the risk of sounding pretentiously postmodern, evangelicals would be served by reflections toward a "metaliturgics," a liturgical theology that does not ask, "What is the warrant for this gesture?" or "Must we say these words?" but instead seeks the meaning and status of ritual action as such.

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From the cultural-linguistic perspective, rites are as important as doctrines in defining a community. Rites, Lindbeck emphasizes, are not mere external decorations but the means through which the interpretive pattern of the religion is exhibited, transmitted, and interiorized. In this perspective the narrative and ritual patterns of Christianity do not merely express prior religious experience but give shape to experience and even form the conditions of the possibility of Christian experience. Perhaps we are not going too far to suggest that the shape of evangelicalism depends on its answer to the question of infant baptism, which sharply poses the question of whether it is possible for external rites to shape experience, rather than merely expressing it.

To suggest the need for a postevangelical theology and practice from a cultural-linguistic perspective is in no way a neo-liberal retreat from strong doctrinal claims into the safe and comforting vacuity of religion as a "life." Rather, it would involve a recovery of the Reformation sense of the Church as a community marked not only by Word, but also by Sacrament and Discipline.

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Last Testament

Christian de Chergé

On May 24, 1996, a group of Islamic terrorists announced that they had "slit the throats" of seven French Trappist monks whom they had kidnapped from the monastery of Tibherine in Algeria and held as hostages for two months. Prior to the kidnapping, the superior of the monastery, Father Christian de Chergé, had left with his family this testament "to be opened in the event of my death."

If it should happen one day—and it could be today—that I become a victim of the terrorism which now seems ready to encompass all the foreigners living in Algeria, I would like my community, my Church, my family, to remember that my life was given to God and to this country. I ask them to accept that the One Master of all life was not a stranger to this brutal departure. I ask them to pray for me: for how could I be found worthy of such an offering? I ask them to be able to associate such a death with the many other deaths that were just as violent, but forgotten through indifference and anonymity.

My life has no more value than any other. Nor any less value. In any case, it has not the innocence of childhood. I have lived long enough to know that I share in the evil which seems, alas, to prevail in the world, even in that which would strike me blindly. I should like, when the time comes, to have a clear space which would allow me to beg forgiveness of God and of all my fellow human beings, and at the same time to forgive with all my heart the one who would strike me down.

I could not desire such a death. It seems to me important to state this. I do not see, in fact, how I could rejoice if this people I love were to be accused indiscriminately of my murder. It would be to pay too dearly for what will, perhaps, be called "the grace of martyrdom," to owe it to an Algerian, whoever he may be, especially if he says he is acting in fidelity to what he believes to be Islam. I know the scorn with which Algerians as a whole can be regarded. I know also the caricature of Islam which a certain kind of Islamism encourages. It is too easy to give oneself a good conscience by identifying this religious way with the fundamentalist ideologies of the extremists. For me, Algeria and Islam are something different; they are a body and a soul. I have proclaimed this often enough, I believe, in the sure knowledge of what I have received in Algeria, in the respect of believing Muslims—finding there so often that true strand of the Gospel I learned at my mother's knee, my very first Church.

My death, clearly, will appear to justify those who hastily judged me naive or idealistic: "Let him tell us now what he thinks of it!" But these people must realize that my most avid curiosity will then be satisfied. This is what I shall be able to do, if God wills—immerse my gaze in that of the Father, to contemplate with him his children of Islam just as he sees them, all shining with the glory of Christ, the fruit of his Passion, filled with the Gift of the Spirit, whose secret joy will always be to establish communion and to refashion the likeness, delighting in the differences.

For this life given up, totally mine and totally theirs, I thank God who seems to have wished it entirely for the sake of that joy in everything and in spite of everything. In this "thank you," which is said for everything in my life from now on, I certainly include you, friends of yesterday and today, and you my friends of this place, along with my mother and father, my brothers and sisters and their families—the hundredfold granted as was promised!

And you also, the friend of my final moment, who would not be aware of what you were doing. Yes, for you also I wish this "thank you"—and this *adieu*—to commend you to the God whose face I see in yours.

And may we find each other, happy "good thieves," in Paradise, if it pleases God, the Father of us both. Amen.

Translated by the Monks of Mount Saint Bernard Abbey, Leicester, England.

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The Achievement of Alasdair MacIntyre

Edward T. Oakes

Moral philosophers are caught in a peculiar paradox these days. On the one hand, their field is flourishing: No longer intimidated by the logical positivists (who denied truth to moral assertions except as expressions of likes and dislikes), thinkers as diverse as Iris Murdoch, Martha Nussbaum, and Bernard Williams are leading the attack against such debilitating philosophical notions as Hume's notorious "Is/Ought" distinction and Kant's simplistic fusion of morality with mere duty. On the other hand, the *world* in which these moral philosophers flourish is a world that has lost its moral bearings in an unprecedented way.

The philosopher most attuned to this paradox is Alasdair MacIntyre, and his analysis goes furthest, I think, in explaining why the twentieth century is so uniquely appalling. His work is not necessarily the best moral philosophy now being written—Iris Murdoch, for one, may offer a rival philosophy he would find difficult to answer—but his analysis of our moral paradox is so acute that he, perhaps uniquely among contemporary philosophers, offers the possibility of its solution.

One sign of a great philosopher is his effective use of metaphor at just the right moment. One reason Plato has had such a hold on the Western imagination is that few readers are ever apt to forget his famous Allegory of the Cave, whatever else they might remember from their undergraduate reading days. Similarly, MacIntyre has come up with a metaphor to explain exactly why it is that moral debate in today's society is so shrill and so rarely leads to consensus—why, in other words, society seems utterly incapable of coming to enough basic agreement in matters of ethics to enable it to deal with the moral chaos that surrounds us.

The moral problem, as MacIntyre describes it, is evident enough: arguments about just war, abortion, capital punishment, or equality lead inevitably to shrill and sterile debate. In an allegory similar to the premise of Walter Miller's Catholic science-fiction novel *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, MacIntyre imagines a series of environmental disasters turning the public violently against the natural sciences:

> Widespread riots occur, laboratories are burnt down, physicists are lynched, books and instruments are destroyed. Finally a Know-Nothing political movement takes power and successfully abolishes science teaching in schools and universities, imprisoning and executing the remaining scientists. Later still, there is a reaction against this destructive movement and enlightened people seek to revive science, although they have largely forgotten what it was. But all that they possess are fragments: a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of the theoretical context which gave them significance; parts of theories unrelated either to the other bits and pieces of theory or to experiment; instruments whose use has been forgotten; half-chapters from books, single pages from articles, not always fully legible because torn and charred.

Any similarity here to the denizens of Plato's cave is no doubt intentional, for what most characterizes both populations is their lack of any clue that they are dwelling inside an epistemological inferno, a veritable Walpurgis Night of confused notions, empty opinions, and hollow ideas. But as the cave dwellers of MacIntyre's dystopia emerge into the light, what they see is not the Sun of Plato's ideal world but mere shards and fragments of the past, with no coherent way of putting the pieces back together again:

> Nonetheless all these fragments are reembodied

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> in a set of practices which go under the revived names of physics, chemistry, and biology. Adults argue with each other about the respective merits of relativity theory, evolutionary biology, and the phlogiston theory, although they possess only a very partial knowledge of each. Children learn by heart the surviving portions of the periodic table and recite as incantations some of the theorems of Euclid. Nobody, or almost nobody, realizes that what they are doing is not natural science in any proper sense at all. For everything that they do and say [used to] conform to certain canons of consistency and coherence; [but now] those contexts which would be needed to make sense of what they are doing have been lost, perhaps irretrievably.

Such, says MacIntyre, is the present state of moral argument. Some hidden catastrophe has undermined moral reasoning, so that all we have now are words like "good" and "moral" and "useful" ripped from their contexts, surviving only as relics. And so we live like cavemen in a science-fiction future, using tools fashioned for complex moral discourse as crude weapons to carry on our Stone-Age moral battles—like people after a nuclear war using the severed arms of statues as clubs.

MacIntyre realizes that his allegory admits no easy solution. Toward the end of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* he writes rather wistfully, "A book which ends by concluding . . . [merely] where and how to begin may not seem to have achieved very much." Moreover, he concedes, "it is no longer possible to speak except . . . in a way which will involve conflict with rival traditions."

But an important presupposition of dialogue for MacIntyre is the ability to maintain the integrity of one's own position. And that is difficult under today's rules: what one considers a conflict *with* liberalism is taken by the larger culture as a conflict *within* liberalism:

> Liberalism is often successful in preempting the debate . . . so that [objections to it] appear to have become debates within liberalism. . . . So-called conservatism and so-called radicalism in these contemporary guises are in general mere stalking-horses for liberalism: the contemporary debates within modern political systems are almost exclusively between conservative liberals, liberal liberals, and radical liberals. There is little place in such political systems for the criticism of the system itself, that is, for putting liberalism in question.

This frustrating dynamic rests, for MacIntyre, on the same hidden catastrophe that led to our current moral cave-dwelling: although logical positivism as a philosophical movement has collapsed, the liberal culture still takes morality to assert feelings and opinions. This is why, for example, surveying public opinion about moral issues is so important for liberalism, since the act of surveying confirms the thesis that moral issues boil down simply to opinions. But MacIntyre's observation also shows why, for non-emotivists, such surveys must always issue in a complete non sequitur: one does not abrogate the Ten Commandments by pointing to the number of murders in Detroit, or the divorce rate in Reno, or the decline in church attendance in Peoria.

MacIntyre's critique of liberalism gives his thought an aura of unusual radicality. MacIntyre is a puzzling figure: neither a conservative (in Edmund Burke's classical sense) nor a liberal, he is a man who would like to commit himself fully to a tradition and yet who spots the contradictions in whatever tradition he happens at the moment to subscribe to. He is a political philosopher, I think, in search of a political philosophy.

MacIntyre won a certain notoriety for his "conversion" (his word) from Marxism to Thomism, which counts today as moving toward "conservatism." But if in key respects his philosophy is conservative, his views still bear unmistakable traces of his earlier Marxism—which is perhaps why he has provoked critical comment from neoconservatives (who tend to be more open than paleoconservatives to what MacIntyre calls the "central features of the modern economic order"). Maurice Cowling, in the *New Criterion*, says bluntly that MacIntyre's "politics are naive. As a philosopher he lacks the hard clinicality of English philosophers of his generation."

And, truth to tell, MacIntyre's first book, *Marxism: An Interpretation*, does draw a crude and clumsy parallel between Christianity and Marxism: Lenin's "conversion" corrupted Marxism with power, just as Constantine's corrupted Christianity; Marxism confines "salvation" to the proletariat, just as Christianity confines it to the doctrinally orthodox; etc.

It must also be admitted that such crude parallels crop up occasionally in his later work. Even in *After Virtue* (1981), MacIntyre claims that "the barbarous despotism . . . which reigns in Moscow can be taken to be as irrelevant to the question of the moral substance of Marxism as the life of the Borgia Pope was to that of the moral substance of Christianity" (a view not likely to be shared by such as Alexandr Solzhenitsyn).

And yet, MacIntyre's journey from Marxism to Thomism is instructive in our moral chaos, for his sympathy for Marx gave him the initial radicality toward liberalism that grounded all his later analyses. Take, for example, those Marxists who felt a moral revulsion toward the Moscow Show Trials of the thirties or the Soviet invasions of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. "A Communist who broke with his Party on account of such actions,"

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writes MacIntyre, "and who did so not merely because he felt such actions to be imprudent from the Communist standpoint, but because he believed them to be wrong, was and is peculiarly vulnerable to the question: 'What do you mean by "wrong"?'"

It is one thing to laud Marxists who had not been too corrupted to object to Stalin's crimes. But it is another thing to claim that contemporary alternatives are any better, and we can see here the importance of MacIntyre's journey from Marxism. The revulsion felt by an ex-Communist must have its roots in an innate sense of right and wrong, that is, in conscience. But "the ex-Communist is bound to ask in what way contemporary liberalism has offered any moral alternative to the morality of communism." Not many ex-Communists in fact posed this question, because to do so would be to undermine the presupposition that binds Marxism with all modern forms of moral calculation; "the utilitarian attention to consequences rather than to actions themselves is liable to lead to a continuous evaluation of the present only as it leads on to some future." This is what Marxists and liberals share in their system of moral evaluation, and this is why for MacIntyre the rejection of the one entails the rejection of the other.

This link between Marxist and liberal ethics perhaps explains why MacIntyre maintains his suspicion of market forces. The utilitarian belief that "human goods can be measured against each other by means of some quantitative scale is the belief that human goods can be assessed in a way analogous to that by which commodities have a monetary value. For just this reason Marx saw Bentham as a philosopher with the mind of a small shopkeeper."

MacIntyre takes the unity of liberalism, laissez-faire capitalism, Marxism, and utilitarianism not just as proof for his science-fiction metaphor, but also as a pointer to the teleological alternative that is, he believes, the only solution left. "Once we have detached ourselves from the Benthamite illusion that happiness or pleasure consists in the having of certain sensations," he argues, "then it is clear that we have to distinguish between those activities which are carried out only as a means to something else and those activities which are worthwhile in themselves."

This is the great turn in MacIntyre's thought—and it is worth noting that it appears in his 1968 *Marxism and Christianity*. The Aristotelian turn in *After Virtue* is not the surprise development it has been taken to be. Even when he was most sympathetic to Marxism, he had tracked down its contradictions and its links to other, more liberal and individualistic, versions of morality. It is no wonder, then, that *After Virtue* found such a wide hearing, for it seemed to offer the key with which we could reassemble our shards and fragments into a coherent moral system.

This is perhaps too much to claim for the book—and it is more than MacIntyre himself claimed. In fact, so deep is his pessimism that he concludes *After Virtue* with a passage predicting a new Dark Ages:

> It is always dangerous to draw too precise parallels between one historical period and another; and among the more misleading of such parallels are those which have been drawn between our own age . . . and the epoch in which the Roman Empire declined into the Dark Ages. Nonetheless certain parallels there are. . . . What they set themselves to achieve—often not recognizing fully what they were doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness. If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point. . . . This time, however, the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers, they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are not waiting for Godot, but for another—and doubtless very different—St. Benedict.

Historians will complain that the barbarians did govern parts of the Roman Empire for some time, and the dismissal of our own governing elite as barbarians has dangerous consequences, as Oklahoma City shows too well. But what is most striking about this image is again its similarity to Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, where a religious order like the Benedictines is what keeps at least a fragmentary knowledge of science alive after a nuclear catastrophe. As survivors of MacIntyre's moral catastrophe emerge from their Stone Age moral habitats, they will presumably cobble together Aristotle, the New Testament, and Thomas Aquinas to establish a new order of civility—and we will find again a coherent moral order. The plausibility of this scenario depends, of course, on how convincing the arguments for MacIntyre's own proposals are, and on how well he reestablishes the coherence of ethics using these same fragmented sources.

One difficulty we face reading MacIntyre is that he gives us no guidance in our sharp moral disputes. He takes no position on capital punishment, abortion, or just war (the irresolvability of which he regards as indicative of our impoverished ethical conversation). Moreover, there is a persistent ambiguity to his awaited quasi-Benedictine order. Will it be a community holding common ethical positions, or will it admit a wide diversity of views (but having first learned how to converse in a way that brings about real progress)?

Part of the difficulty we have answering this question is that MacIntyre's prose style has become more

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verbose and repetitious as his career has progressed. He is not exactly prolix, but he has a way of returning again and again to the same theme without a clear resolution, so that his syntax becomes ever more convoluted—a syntax his phobia of commas makes no easier to unravel.

But in his *Three Rival Versions of Morality* (1990)—where he notes that a university represents a "universe" of discourse only where rival and antagonistic views are afforded the opportunity both to develop their own positions and to debate other viewpoints—he implies that his quasi-Benedictine community will be one of civil conversation across the barricades. This is not easy to achieve, in part because the more emotionally one opposes emotivism, the more one seems to justify it, and in part because our post-catastrophe moral fragments do not present us with any obvious way in which to put them together. As MacIntyre puts it in the Phi Sigma Tau Lectures (published in 1990 as *First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*):

> Abstract these conceptions of truth and reality from [their] teleological framework, and you will thereby deprive them of the only context by reference to which they can be made fully intelligible and rationally defensible. Yet the widespread rejection of Aristotelian teleology and of a whole family of cognate notions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries resulted in just such a deprivation. In consequence, conceptions of truth and rationality became, as it were, free-floating.

That word "teleological" is the key to MacIntyre's solution, the loss of which is the cause of the catastrophe described in his science-fiction parable. Teleology is the study of final causes, goals, purposes, and aims: a style of explanation that saturates Aristotle's philosophy. After the combined impact of Newton and Darwin, however, this type of explanation seems mostly quaint—and once Aristotle's *science* seemed quaint, his ethics soon followed: when Newton demonstrated how motion can be better explained as resulting from the outcome of mechanical laws, and when Darwin posited natural selection as the "mechanism" for explaining an organ's functionality, the use of teleology in ethics was doomed.

This is perhaps the greatest category mistake ever made in the history of philosophy. Emptying moral discourse of teleological concepts because of the perceived impact of Newton and Darwin has been for MacIntyre *the* catastrophe of our times. In the Aristotelian tradition, MacIntyre argues, "there is a fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature. . . . The precepts which enjoin the various virtues and prohibit the vices instruct us how to move from potentiality to act, how to realize our true nature, and to reach our true end. To defy them will be to be frustrated and incomplete, to fail to achieve that good of rational happiness which it is peculiarly ours as a species to pursue."

Without an acknowledgment of this distinction, Aristotle's ethics collapses into a mere collection of observations. But if the distinction were readmitted into ethics, its impact would be revolutionary—for we would have to regard "good" as conveying factual information, not mere emotion. Just as one can usually distinguish, according to their purposes, a good from a bad saddle or a good from a bad cavalry officer, so too the judgment of good and bad in the ethical sense should be eminently adjudicable if moral behavior is goal-determined. But "rejection of Aristotelian teleology means rejection of the context whereby evaluative language can be seen as a kind of factual language." And the consequences of the rejection could not have been more pernicious. "When Kant recognizes that there is a deep incompatibility between any account of action which recognizes the role of moral imperatives in governing action and any . . . mechanical type of explanation, he is compelled to the conclusion that actions obeying and embodying moral imperatives must be from the standpoint of science inexplicable and unintelligible."

And the rest, as they say, is history. "The eighteenth-century moral philosophers . . . inherited a set of moral injunctions on the one hand and a conception of human nature on the other which had been expressly designed to be discrepant with each other. . . . They inherited incoherent fragments of a once coherent scheme of thought and action, and since they did not recognize their own peculiar historical and cultural situation they could not recognize the impossible and quixotic character of their self-appointed task."

Once this is realized, the career of moral philosophy after Kant makes perfect sense. "Kant's failure provided Kierkegaard with his starting point: the act of choice had to be called in to do the work that reason could not do." This act is literally pre-ethical, since it precedes the living out of a moral life: one first decides to *be* ethical, and then one is. Kierkegaard shares with Kant the assumption that being moral inevitably involves a struggle to thwart the impulses of human nature, which by definition must tug the agent in the direction of aesthetic indulgence—and where does ethics derive the authority to make me go against my feelings? Kierkegaard by and large avoided the question, for to face it would be to expose the central flaw in his thought. His title *Either/Or* is telling, for (as MacIntyre observes) the book's doctrine "is plainly to the effect that the principles which depict the ethical way of life are to be adopted *for no reason.*"

To which Nietzsche would have replied, "Precisely." Nietzsche's great merit for MacIntyre is his ability

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to see this contradiction and to proclaim its consequences—serving for MacIntyre as "the canary in the coal mine," the signal of the despair awaiting us in the twentieth century. Indeed, one of the chapters of *After Virtue* is entitled "Nietzsche or Aristotle?"—for moral philosophy boils down to emotivism or teleology. Nietzsche has performed the inestimable service of exposing contemporary moral presuppositions as the fictions they are: "If there is nothing to morality but expressions of will, my morality can only be what my will creates."

In one especially amusing comparison, MacIntyre likens Nietzsche to King Kamehameha II, who in a single stroke abolished the taboo system on the Hawaiian islands in 1819. Even in the previous century, visitors like Captain Cook could get from the native population no satisfactory answer to the question why certain items were "taboo"—or even what taboo *meant*. By the time of Kamehameha, the whole system had lost its hold on the people. If the natives had had the benefits of Anglo-Saxon philosophy at the time, MacIntyre wryly observes, they could have come up with the answer: "Had the Polynesian culture enjoyed the blessings of analytical philosophy, it is all too clear that the question of the meaning of taboo could have been resolved in a number of ways. *Taboo*, it would have been said by one party, is clearly the name of a non-natural property. . . . Another party would doubtless have argued that 'This is *taboo*' means roughly the same as 'I disapprove of this; do so as well.'" And so on.

What is missing from this surreal post-catastrophe debate is any sense of how the word "taboo" (that is: bad) got disengaged from its original context. And emotivism is the key to how our own moral words became disengaged—and the key as well to why our own debates are so shrill. How could they not be, since emotion is the substance of moral conversation? This is why the prose style of both Kierkegaard and Nietzsche seems so overheated, compared with Aristotle's or Aquinas'. And it is also why the decibel level of political debate is so extraordinarily high. We have achieved, MacIntyre laments, Nietzsche's prediction of "Great Politics":

> It is easy also to understand why *protest* becomes a distinctive moral feature of the modern age and why *indignation* is a predominant modern emotion. . . . Protest is now almost entirely that negative phenomenon which characteristically occurs as a reaction to the alleged invasion of someone's *rights* in the name of someone else's *utility*. The self-assertive shrillness of protest arises because . . . protestors can never win an *argument*: the indignant self-righteousness of protest arises because . . . the protestors can never lose an argument either. Hence the *utterance* of protest is characteristically addressed to those who already *share* the protestors' premises. . . . Protestors rarely have anyone else to talk to but themselves. This is not to say that protest cannot be effective; it is to say that it cannot be *rationally* effective.

The obvious accuracy of this passage constitutes the clincher for MacIntyre's argument. But perhaps an even better argument for his view is the loneliness and anomie that comes from a "lifestyle" that contemns the virtues. Those who take the emotivist route pay a heavy price in stifling their human nature, leaving unfulfilled what is meant to be fulfilled. Consider not just the appalling record of the twentieth century; consider as well the sullenness of so many high school students today, the emptiness of their elders in college, the despair of the underclass, the desperate fun-seeking of the jet set, the divorce rate, the incidence of child abuse, and on and on.

MacIntyre is not naive about the tenacity of liberals to refuse to give Aristotle a hearing simply because Aquinas had so successfully baptized him for the Church: "It is safe to predict that to the vast majority of such protagonists it will seem preferable to remain in almost any predicament than to accept a Thomistic diagnosis." MacIntyre, however, has too carefully laid out the hidden connections between war, genocide, racism, and modern emotivist morality to give liberals much time for self-congratulation (it is in fact this self-congratulation that constitutes such a barrier to dialogue). But true to his innately civil soul, MacIntyre also warns the Aristotelian Thomist against this vice:

> It is at this point that the Thomist has to resist the temptation to premature self-congratulation. . . . For it is not so much that Thomism has emerged unscathed from two serious philosophical encounters [with Enlightenment rationalism and Nietzschean emotivism] as that no serious philosophical encounter has as yet taken place. The Thomist conception . . . is untouched by contemporary radical critiques in key part because the cultural, linguistic, and philosophical distance between it and them is now so great that they are no longer able seriously to envisage the possibility of . . . [a] serious encounter.

It is Alasdair MacIntyre's achievement that the distance he speaks of is a little less abysmal, a little less intimidating—and the possibility of a serious encounter between emotivists, rationalists, and Aristotelian Thomists a little bit closer. FT

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Bonhoeffer and the Sovereign State

Jean Bethke Elshtain

The decision to attempt the assassination of Hitler, to "cut off the head of the snake," was difficult for many of the conspirators involved in the 1945 "July 20th Plot." But it was particularly tormenting for the Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who had long felt the attraction of pacifism and who had planned a sojourn in India with Gandhi. Some of Bonhoeffer's later readers have looked to his writings for a general rationale for opposing tyrannical power even to the point of violence. But they have been disappointed, for Bonhoeffer never penned a full-fledged justification of his determination to resist.

In part, I think, Bonhoeffer refrained from writing such a justification because he feared that it might be taken as grounds for resistance in situations less dire than his own: If hard cases make bad law, extreme political situations make bad precedents for everyday ones. And in part, of course, he could not write it because time was not given him by his Nazi executioners. But we may gain an understanding of just how desperate Bonhoeffer saw his situation to be if we examine certain key themes in his writings: his tantalizing and under-developed notion of responsibility, his concept of deputyship, and, especially, his historical analysis of the growth of modern adoration for sovereignty—of the entwining in the Enlightenment of sovereignty over the nation and the sovereignty of the self. We may even gain from such an examination a general understanding of what, for Bonhoeffer, we must render unto Caesar and what we must not.

Bonhoeffer saw himself as a faithful follower of Luther in his refusal of what Germans were asked to render to their terrible Caesar. Any reduction of Luther's doctrine of the "Two Kingdoms" to a notion that there are two spheres, "the one divine, holy, supernatural, and Christian, and the other worldly, profane, natural, and un-Christian," Bonhoeffer held to be a vulgarization. The modern reading of the Two Kingdoms—a reading shaped (Bonhoeffer would say deformed) by the Enlightenment—unwittingly finalized the separation of Christian concerns from the secular and profane. "On the Protestant side," he writes, "Luther's doctrine of the Two Kingdoms was misinterpreted as implying the emancipation and sanctification of the world and of the natural. Government, reason, economics, and culture arrogate to themselves a right of autonomy, but do not in any way understand this autonomy as bringing them into opposition to Christianity." The Lutheran misunderstanding of Luther contributed over time to the Enlightenment cult of reason and the emergence of the self-mastering self.

With that triumph came an idolatrous faith in progress that could only result in nationalism—the "Western godlessness" that became in modern times its own religion. In the "apostasy of the Western world from Jesus Christ," a massive defection from our collective recognition of finitude, we abandoned the knowledge that we are creatures as well as creators. This for Bonhoeffer is the backdrop to twentieth-century totalitarianism, a terrible story of what happens when we presume we stand alone as Sovereign Selves within Sovereign States, a terrible story of what happens when individual hubris meets nationalism.

Bonhoeffer was no simplistic basher of modernity. He understood the impossibility of undoing the Enlightenment and recovering the premodern world. But he believed that we could tame and chasten modern profanations—including the notion that human beings are sovereign masters, unencumbered in their sway. The key seems to be a recognition of

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the ironic reversal that follows the enthronement of reason. The Enlightenment proclamation of man as the rational master and unlimited sovereign of his own fate contrasts oddly with Nazi invocations of "the irrational, of blood and instinct, of the beast of prey in man," but the Nazi invocations succeeded, in part, primarily because appeals to reason, human rights, culture, and humanity—appeals that "until very recently had served as battle slogans against the Church"—could not succeed in Nazi Germany. For such appeals depended for their success upon a culture upheld by the very Church that had been weakened and compromised. The uninhibited "Will to Power" that constitutes totalitarianism is born from sovereign and unlimited reason, but reason itself gets battered and bloodied when sovereignty goes too far—when it refuses to acknowledge a limit.

It is in the ironies of the French Revolution, especially, that Bonhoeffer sees the first joinings of freedom and terror, a terrible godlessness in human presumption of godlikeness. Man begins to adore himself. He denies the Cross, denies the Mediator and Reconciler. He is avid in his regicide, idolatrous in his deicide. The radical, Bonhoeffer declares, has fallen out with the created world and cannot forgive God His creation.

Thus it is that those who deify man actually despise him. God, who does not deify man, loves human beings and the world: "man as he is; not an ideal world, but the real world. . . . He does not permit us to classify men and the world according to our own standards and to set ourselves up as judges over them." But this is precisely what the deifiers of human sovereignty do: they become their own standard, with the result that human beings devour themselves. Western godlessness underwrites the triumph of modern totalizing ideologies that recognize no limits.

The confluent forces of post-Enlightenment politics—the self-sovereignty of both the self and the state—deepened the overall quotient of "folly" in the human race. Demagogues found it all too easy to play to human weakness. Weak human beings are ripe for mobilization, ever susceptible to becoming tools in the hands of tyrants. "Any violent display of power, whether political or religious, produces an outburst of folly in a large part of mankind," writes Bonhoeffer. Exploiters and charlatans arise. Often they do only limited damage, but when they triumph, as they had in Bonhoeffer's time and place, traditional ethical responses seem inadequate to oppose them.

A review of the history of modern sovereignty and the nationalism to which it gave rise may help us understand the virulent political idolatry Bonhoeffer faced. To the question of what makes a nation-state a state at all, the answer is a sovereignty self-proclaimed and duly recognized. The proclamation alone won't do; recognition must follow. Hegel's bloody-mindedness about war as the definitive test of a state's existence is a culmination of the state system that triumphed with the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. As every first-year student of political history learns, Westphalia marks the codification of the nation-state precisely because it constitutes the *recognition* of such states. With sovereignty, rulers and states take unto themselves powers previously reserved to the Sovereign God. Too often, no longer seeing nations under God's judgment, they proclaim the state the final judge of its own affairs. Indeed, claims to state power as dominion, a notion essential to early modern theories of state sovereignty, were parasitic upon older proclamations of God's sovereign power.

That God is Sovereign, the Progenitor and Creator, is central to Hebrew and Christian metaphysics. From God's sovereignty comes the "right of dominion over his creatures, to dispose and determine them as seemeth him good," writes Elisha Coles in his 1835 *Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty*. "There can be but one infinite; but one omnipotent; but one supreme; but one first cause; and He is the author of all." John Murray, speaking at the First American Calvinistic Conference in 1939, notes that "the moment we posit the existence of anything independent of God in its derivation of factual being, in that moment we have denied the divine sovereignty. . . . The moment we allow the existence of anything outside of His fiat as its principle or origination and outside of His government as the principle of its continued existence, then we have eviscerated the *absoluteness* of the divine authority and rule."

God's right is coterminous with His power: it is a right of dominion, rule, and possession in which human beings are subject to the sovereignty of the God who misses nothing and attends to everything. And yet, though this vision dominated "sovereignty talk" for centuries, it ironically helped establish the modern nation-state. Sovereignty migrated, so to speak, from God's domain—or a particular version of it—to a domain devised by man and arrogated unto himself. When modern man forgot he was not God, as Václav Havel recently put it, "sovereign mastery" was the name he gave this forgetfulness.

Consider Jean Bodin's claim that "Sovereignty is that absolute and perpetual power vested in a commonwealth which in Latin is termed *majestas*." Or consider the claim of Thomas Hobbes—one of the most canny, the most inventive of all sovereign-discoursers—that:

> the only way to erect such a Common Power . . . is to conferre all their power and strength upon one Man, or upon one Assembly of men, that they may reduce all their Wills . . . unto one Will . . . as if every man should say to every man, "I Authorize and give up my Right of

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> Governing my selfe, to this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give the Right to him, and Authorise all his Actions in like manner." . . . This is the Generation of that great Leviathan, or rather (to speak more reverently) of that Mortall God, to which we owe under the Immortal God, our peace and defence. . . . And he that carryeth this Person, is called Soveraigne, and said to have Soveraigne Power; and ever one besides, his Subject.

Hobbes enumerates the sovereign's rights and powers: to judge all opinions, to name all names, to defend all as "a thing necessary to Peace, thereby to *prevent Discord and Civill Warre.*" Hobbes, Bodin, and a small army of legalists helped to give the emerging centralized monarchies a basis in legal and political theory. But to do so, they also relied upon (and appropriated to their own purposes) a whole body of pre-statist sovereign theory, some of it indebted to elaborate defenses of the power of the papacy (under the Sovereign God, I must add). As historian Antony Black puts it:

> It now seems clear . . . that much of this was already created for them by papal theory. Certainly, long before this period, Roman imperial doctrine had been used by national kings and territorial princes to justify the overriding of positive laws and a centralized system of legislation and appointment. Papal doctrine both endorsed this . . . and also supplied something of the more abstract and more generally applicable notion of sovereignty which was to be fully developed in the works of Bodin.

The difference between earthly powers and God is that the earthly sovereign, although untrammeled in his power in the temporal space that is History, is subject to God's grace or punishment. But having taken unto himself all the features of the deity—including, in some sense, the creating of a perpetual earthly domain—the sovereign finds precious little constraint on his sovereignty. "Absolute sovereignty," the twentieth-century political theorist Raymond Aron writes, "corresponded to the ambition of kings eager to free themselves from the restriction Church and Empire imposed upon them, medieval residues. At the same time it permitted condemning the privileges of intermediate bodies: feudal lords, regions, cities, guilds—privileges which no longer had any basis if the sovereign's will was the unique source of rights and duties."

In sum, then, the story goes like this: The Sovereign God gets displaced in the early modern theory of sovereignty, taking up residence at a much greater remove than He had for medieval Europeans, where God's sovereignty was incessantly enjoined as a brake on the king's designs. (The medieval history of the authority of the Church is another story. To say that the Church was unhappy with the presuppositions codified at Westphalia is an understatement.)

But a second displacement occurs when, after the Treaty of Westphalia, even kings begin to find their sovereignty usurped by the political body over which they rule. Sovereignty shifts from king to state, and the state "can no more alienate its sovereignty than a man can alienate his will and remain a man," as Charles Merriam, a rather sober proponent of the classical theory, puts it. Jean-Jacques Rousseau protected sovereignty in this way through his postulation of the inalienability of the general will: the state *and sovereignty are one. Popular sovereignty is, if* anything, even more absolute and terrifying than that of the king, if the French Revolution and its aftermath is any indication.

After Westphalia, then, sovereignty signifies the freedom of a sovereign entity to regulate its own affairs without interference. In the words of Supreme Court Justice George Sutherland, in the 1936 *U.S. v. Curtiss-Wright Export* decision, "Rulers come and go; governments end and forms of government change; but sovereignty survives. A political society cannot endure without a supreme will somewhere. Sovereignty is never held in suspense." All who speak of sovereignty seem to share a deep preoccupation with the notion of a unified will. As God's Will is singular, so must be the sovereign state's, whether as Hobbes' Leviathan or Rousseau's General Will.

This preoccupation with willing "the final say" is but one point in the discourse of sovereignty, but it helps us understand Bonhoeffer's principled, theologically grounded refusal to obey an idolatrous state and its utter abandon to the singular will of the leader. Bonhoeffer joined a violent revolt in order to defeat idolaters who travestied Christian values and authentic German patriotism. The Nazi Caesar asked Bonhoeffer and others to render too much.

For Bonhoeffer, what constitutes legitimate state authority is a concept of *deputyship.* Parents act in behalf of the children, but what they can and should do occurs within the bounded order of the family. Similarly, what the state can and should do occurs within the bounded order of political government. Responsible action flowing from legitimate authority is always limited. Bonhoeffer reminds us that "the term 'state' means an ordered community; government is the power which creates and maintains order. . . . Government is divinely ordained authority to exercise worldly dominion by divine right. Government is deputyship for God on earth."

But modern Lutheranism—at least in Bonhoeffer's Germany—had acquired a notion of the "natural state through Hegel and romanticism" that makes of the state not so much the fulfillment of "the universally human and rational character of man, but of the creative will of God in the people. The state is essen-

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tially a nation-state." Thereby, the state becomes, as it was for Hegel, its own ground of being, "the actual subject or originator of . . . the people, the culture, the economy, or the religion. It is 'the real god'"—which makes it very difficult for the average citizen to see the state's coercive power directed against man.

The original Lutheran Reformation, however, in its return to Augustine, was a turn against such concepts of sovereignty, claims Bonhoeffer. Sin and the Fall are what make government necessary. As such, government is not that which helps the human person to flourish, and Luther insists on the restraints and limits of government. Government is indeed, Bonhoeffer declares, "independent of the manner of its coming into being." It is "of God," and an "ethical failure" on the part of government does not automatically deprive it of "its divine dignity." Thus, to say "my country, right or wrong," need not be an expression of political chauvinism so much as a tragic recognition that it is *my* country, right or wrong, and I am in some way responsible even as I am in some way beholden. Government's tasks are legitimate in certain limited ways, in Bonhoeffer's characterization. We owe obedience, under normal circumstances.

We do not owe government our very selves, however, for it does not create us. It may curb, compel, and chastise us. Indeed, the individual's "duty of obedience is binding . . . until government directly compels him to offend against the divine commandment, that is to say, until government openly denies its divine commission and thereby forfeits its claims. In cases of doubt obedience is required; for the Christian does not bear the responsibility of government. But if government violates or exceeds its commission at any point, for example by making itself master over the belief of the congregation, then at this point, indeed, obedience is to be refused, for conscience's sake, for the Lord's sake."

But we must not generalize from this dire circumstance to a *duty to disobey*. Disobedience is always concrete and particular, while "generalizations lead to an apocalyptic diabolization of government. Even an anti-Christian government is still in a certain sense government. . . . An apocalyptic view of a particular concrete government would necessarily have total disobedience as its consequence; for in that case every single act of obedience obviously involves a denial of Christ."

This is a very austere argument. Many will argue that Bonhoeffer unacceptably downplays the good possibilities of states and that he sets up a too strenuous requirement once the threshold of disobedience is crossed. But it is very much in tune with Bonhoeffer's determination to explore the "in between" (in this instance, in between state idolatry and state diabolization). Action against an evil government, or a specific evil promulgated by government, is part of the realm of concrete responsibility, always undertaken in the "midst of the needs, the conflicts, the decisions of the immediate world around us from which there is no escape into general ideals and principles."

Bonhoeffer could never have made his peace with any regime that promoted rabid nationalism or that eclipsed the space for the free exercise of human responsibility—for in a "world come of age" human beings are called to account, and any system that demands the surrender of our identity to what Havel has called the "social-autotality" is an order whose claims on us are suspect. Neither could he support a regime that served cynicism, collusion in evil deeds, and human isolation, desolation, and terror, or that worshipped History and Power and accepted no brake by definition on its sovereign designs—for such a regime repudiates the Sovereign God who holds the nations under judgment.

For Bonhoeffer, I need not "wear myself out in impotent zeal against all wrong, all misery that is in the world." But neither am I "entitled self-satisfied security to let the wicked world run its course so long as I cannot myself do anything to change it and so long as I have done my own work. What is the place and what are the limits of my responsibility?"

Bonhoeffer leaves us with this question. There are no easy answers about what we must render, to whom, and under what circumstances. But we can at least banish the false pride that demands that we be "sovereign" in all things, even as we accept our real but limited responsibility.

In our tormented time, he writes from prison, the Church is an area of freedom, a repository of culture and quality and human decency. It can and should recover its links with the Middle Ages, Bonhoeffer tells us—but leaves tantalizingly under-developed (in the short time he had left) what that might entail. "Liberal theology" cannot help us here: "The weakness of liberal theology was that it conceded to the world the right to determine Christ's place in the world; in the conflict between the Church and the world it accepted the comparatively easy terms of peace that the world dictated. Its strength was that it did not try to put the clock back, and that it genuinely accepted the battle, even though this ended with its defeat."

There is ground left for the Church, of course, but only in the light of the Christ who called human beings away from their weakness and to strength. To restore a rightful balance in the order of things, Bonhoeffer insists that we participate in the powerlessness of God in the world as a form of life even as we acknowledge God's sovereignty over all of life. I suppose this is what might be called Lutheran irony and it goes—as they say nowadays—all the way down. Our adoration of sovereignty makes us weak; we have rendered altogether too much and we have gotten the Caesars we deserve. That is the solemn lesson Dietrich Bonhoeffer leaves us. FT

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The Truth About Crime and Welfare

John J. DiIulio, Jr.

Over the years, First Things has done a good job of highlighting the issue of prison overcrowding, the rehabilitative efficacy of faith-based treatment programs for inmates, and the negative social and moral consequences of employing such discredited and degrading (but once again fashionable) penal sanctions as "chain gangs." Likewise, in commenting on my call to harness churches to the task of resurrecting the civil society of drug-and-crime-ravaged inner-city neighborhoods (The Public Square, April 1996), Father Richard John Neuhaus was right to remind us that to embrace religion solely for the sake of its social utility is to make a "dangerous embrace" and flirt with "a kind of blasphemy." And, on the subject of welfare reform, I concur with the editors of First Things that some type of far-reaching reforms are necessary ("Moynihan's Counsel of Despair," March 1996). But there are additional facts, figures, and arguments about faith, prisons, and welfare policies that may be worth airing in First Things.

Compared to most policy-oriented academics who publish both in scholarly journals and in popular outlets, I am undoubtedly what Fr. Neuhaus termed me: "hard-nosed" and a "strong proponent of incarceration" for violent and repeat criminals, adult and juvenile.

Based on the best survey data, however, it is clear that most Americans of every race, religion, region, demographic description, and socioeconomic status are every bit as tough-minded and in favor of imprisonment as I am. That's why crime has been among the top three civic concerns for most of the last three decades. And that's why crime and crime-related social ills rank as the single biggest reason that the middle class continue to leave the nation's great cities in favor of longer-commute, middle-of-nowhere, but safer (for now) ex-urban zip codes.

Politicians of both parties have used revolving-door justice as a campaign scare tactic, and sometimes as a racially polarizing law-and-order issue. Likewise, the media have often hyped coverage of crime, most especially the local "if-it-bleeds-it-leads" news shows. The fact, nonetheless, is that revolving-door justice is a reality that kills innocent people (many of them children) and destroys entire neighborhoods.

Consider just a few of the key facts. In 1993 Americans suffered over forty-three million criminal victimizations, including over ten million *violent* criminal victimizations, a quarter of them murders, rapes, aggravated assaults, armed robberies, and other injury- or fatality-causing attacks. According to the most recent National Institute of Justice study, each year violent crimes cost their victims and society over $400 billion in direct economic losses and long-term health and other problems (not even counting the tens of millions of property, drug, and other crimes). And yet we spend only about $100 billion a year on all criminal justice activities (police, prosecutors, public defenders, courts, corrections) at all levels of government—a sum that is barely static in terms of total government spending and not even a pittance of our nation's Gross Domestic Product.

Indeed, the revolving-door reality is that the system has broken down to the point where it does not even come close to incarcerating most violent offenders. There are today more convicted adult violent felons doing time on the streets without any real supervision than are serving time behind bars. Not surprisingly, therefore, fully a third of all adult violent crimes are now committed by known offenders out on probation, parole, or pretrial release, and in

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state courts nearly half of all offenders convicted of a single violent crime, and a quarter of those convicted of three or more crimes at least one of which is violent, are not even sentenced to prison.

Make no mistake: the public's loss of trust and confidence in our political institutions has been led by the people's justifiable (and now decades-old) frustration with a government that has failed to restrain known, adjudicated, violent, and repeat criminals from repeatedly returning to the streets and finding new victims.

Between 1980 and 1994, the nation's state and federal prison population increased from 319,598 to 999,808. Over the same period, however, the number of convicted criminals out on probation or parole increased from 1,338,535 to 3,652,325. On any given day, for every three persons who were incarcerated (in state and federal prisons or local jails), seven convicted offenders were on the streets with little or no supervision. Every major experimental and quasi-experimental probation and parole program, including the "intensive" ones about which I had such high hopes in the 1980s, has had to face the reality of high rates of recidivism and a near-total lack of any savings, financial, social, or spiritual.

Indeed, in 1991 alone some 45 percent of state prisoners were criminals who, at the very moment they committed their latest crimes, were on probation or parole. While "under supervision" in the community, they committed at least 218,000 violent crimes, including 13,200 murders and 11,600 rapes (over half of the rapes against children).

Based on a scientific sample representing 711,000 imprisoned felons, Lawrence Greenfeld of the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics has shown conclusively that fully 94 percent of state prisoners had committed one or more violent crimes (62 percent) or committed multiple nonviolent crimes (32 percent) in the past. Comparable national data stretching back to the 1970s make plain that over 90 percent of state prisoners are violent or repeat offenders.

The state-by-state data tell the same tale. For example, in 1990 Harvard economist Anne Morrison Piehl and I studied a large sample of the Wisconsin prison population. We found that in the year before they were imprisoned, Wisconsin prisoners committed a median of twelve crimes, excluding all drug crimes. In 1993 we studied a large sample of New Jersey prisoners and found exactly the same thing—they committed a dozen crimes a year excluding all drug crimes. Empirical studies by analysts at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) and elsewhere indicate that the number of non-drug crimes that prisoners commit when free may be higher than twelve. Thus a recent NBER research bulletin that declared the obvious: "Incarceration can cut crime."

Of course, the whole truth about who really goes to prison in America can be known only from detailed, case-by-case, rap-sheet-by-rap-sheet analyses of those behind bars. For example, several blue-ribbon panels have asserted that the growth in California's prison system since 1980 has been driven largely by the return to prison of "mere technical parole violators" (released felons who simply failed a urine test or failed to show for a date with their parole agent). But when UC-Irvine scholar Joan R. Petersilia dug into the records on the 84,197 adults admitted to California prisons in 1991, she found that only 3,116 (under 4 percent) were, in fact, technical parole violators.

What about "mere drug offenders" behind bars? Between 1980 and 1993, the number of persons in state prisons for violent crimes grew by 221,000, 1.3 times the growth in imprisoned drug offenders. As a recent study funded in part by the National Institute of Justice correctly observes, "the label 'drug offender' is a misnomer. It implies a degree of specialization not supported by research on individual offending patterns," which shows plainly "that drug offenders commonly commit other types of crime, most notably robbery, burglary, and violent offenses."

The fact is that virtually all "drug offenders" behind bars are in for drug trafficking, not mere possession. In 1991, for example, only 703 (2 percent) of the 36,648 persons admitted to federal prisons were in for drug possession. Almost all imprisoned drug traffickers, federal and state, have long criminal records, adult and juvenile. Only their latest or most serious adult conviction is for a drug offense. There are exceptional cases of truly first-time, nonviolent, low-level drug offenders who end up behind bars. (I have supported the executive clemency petitions of a few such inmates.) But they are the exceptions. U.S. attorneys and big-city cops are simply not focusing their enforcement energies against petty drug criminals.

In a recently published Wisconsin Policy Research Institute (WPRI) study of the complete adult and juvenile criminal histories of prisoners from Milwaukee, WPRI analyst George Mitchell and I found that 90 percent of the urban criminals had a prior conviction and 87 percent were in for a violent crime. Based on a review of 3,500 pages of criminal records, we found that first-time drug offenders were less than 2 percent of the prison population. The imprisoned "drug offenders" had multiple arrests, bouts on probation, and adult and juvenile crimes, including auto theft, burglary, robbery, retail theft, domestic violence, sexual assault, drunk driving, jumping bail, and, of course, drug dealing.

And that's just what's on their official records. Swept entirely under the rug are all of the more serious crimes that the imprisoned "drug offenders" have plea-bargained away, not to mention all of the wholly undetected, unprosecuted, and unpunished crimes they may have done (again, probably at least a dozen a year excluding all drug crimes in half or more of all cases).

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I invite anyone who is interested to read our verbatim transcripts drawn from the actual prison intake, pre-sentencing, and probation and parole reports on "first-time," "low-risk," "mere property," and "mere drug" offenders. Read the case-by-case records and then decide for yourself and according to whatever criteria you deem relevant whether any of the imprisoned felons pose no threat to public safety or simply do not deserve to be in prison.

Of course, even the worst prisoners are not human refuse. Since 1987 I have written and spoken out in favor of improving prison administration and the quality of life behind bars. Prisoners are not entitled to every creature comfort, but they are entitled to safety, humane treatment, and opportunities for self-betterment. I said so in *Governing Prisons* (1987), again in *No Escape* (1990), again in a widely used 1992 U.S. Justice Department manual on performance-measurement standards for prisons and jails, and again in testimony and speeches over the last four years (including recent talks before the National District Attorneys Association, the National Association of Attorneys General, the New York State Governor's Criminal Justice Forum, and many others).

While America's prisons are hardly perfect, imprisoned felons are not doing lots of hard time under horrible conditions—far from it. Despite the enactment of mandatory minimum laws, between 1985 and 1992 the average maximum sentences of prisoners declined about 15 percent from seventy-eight months to sixty-seven months. In 1992 the actual time served by felons whose latest conviction was for a violent crime was only forty-three months.

Thanks to new prison construction, prison overcrowding has abated since the 1980s. About a dozen states are now under capacity. In many states, half or more of each prison dollar is spent on inmate medical services and rehabilitation programs, not security basics.

To our nation's credit, most prisons are now well-appointed medium- and minimum-security facilities (well-stocked libraries, computers, and more), not old, dungeon-like maximum-security joints. Like many people who study or have worked in corrections, I have been inside hundreds of prisons and jails over the past fifteen years. I have served as an officer of a big-city jail oversight board, evaluated private prison facilities, and conducted intensive training programs for state and federal prison wardens. Also, I have chaired or been a consultant to several gubernatorial task forces on prisons and sentencing policy. Based on this experience, I am certain that if average Americans of good will toured a representative sample of the nation's prisons, including the newer maximum-security prisons, few of them would exit worrying about prisoners' rights or brutal, warehousing conditions.

Whatever one's perspective on adult crime and punishment in America today, it should be impossible for any honest person to deny that the adult justice system is only America's second biggest self-inflicted crime wound. The juvenile system remains by far the first and worst revolving door.

Over the last decade, virtually every state has seen significant increases in the number and severity of juvenile violent crimes, and has passed get-tough (or, better, "get serious") laws to rectify the problem and protect the public. Yet there has been no meaningful increase in the number of violent and habitual juvenile criminals held in secure confinement.

For example, in 1991 fewer than twenty thousand male juvenile violent offenders were in secure juvenile facilities—but in 1992 alone there were 108,478 juvenile arrests for violent crimes, and more than 1.6 million juvenile arrests for other crimes. In most states, police, prosecutors, and judges do not even have complete access to juvenile records, and some states still forbid fingerprinting juveniles, including kids charged with weapons offenses that would be grade-A felonies if committed by adults. Despite all the new juvenile justice laws, under 2 percent of juvenile delinquents who come before judges are waived to adult courts, and an even smaller fraction end up being restrained in prison or jail.

The "deinstitutionalization" of juvenile criminals (most were never institutionalized in the first place) is an ongoing social disaster. Given the fact that there will be about thirty-five million males age seventeen or under in the population by the year 2010—roughly five million more than there were in 1990, and a larger fraction of boys than ever before growing up as the abused and neglected sons of fatherless, godless, and jobless homes and neighborhoods—the worst is most definitely yet to come.

But I do not despair. Today's four to seven year-old inner-city boys are not yet tomorrow's juvenile superpredators or the next century's first class of adult career criminals. Time is rapidly running out, but we still have choices. Especially with respect to the acute dilemma of black youth crime, we must choose both incarceration and salvation: incarceration, to restrain the deviant, delinquent, and criminal element that is already upon us from inflicting further harm against life, liberty, and property; salvation via faith-based, church-centered approaches, to save young souls and lives before it is too late.

With the Reverend Eugene Rivers of Boston and others, I am actively working toward the goal of organizing one thousand black inner-city churches around a faith-anchored ten-point youth and community development plan. The plan has already shown miraculous results in Boston and a few other cities. We aim to organize at least fifty churches in each of the nation's twenty largest cities around the same plan. As Pastor Rivers says, "It's either barbed wire and more black juvenile superpredators, or civil

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society and stronger black churches. It's that simple."

Just as I think the Reverend Rivers is right about faith and youth crime, I think Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan is mostly right about another issue with special relevance to the fate of America's inner cities, namely, welfare reform.

As FIRST THINGS has acknowledged, Senator Moynihan has forgotten more than most of us will ever know about welfare policies. And he has always had a keen eye and a stout heart about telling sobering social facts. His opposition to the latest welfare reform packages is firmly in that truth-speaking tradition. Some snippets of his recent reformist rhetoric may disappoint, but the reformist rhetoric on the other side of the aisle in Congress—a rhetoric that has likened welfare recipients to lazy animals, among other disgraceful word-images—has been far, far worse.

When it comes to welfare policies, God is truly in the statutory and administrative details. Just as it was obvious to everyone in the 1960s that lots of folks were poor, it is now obvious to almost everyone that welfare has done at least as much harm as good, proven more expensive than anticipated, and had many perverse and unintended consequences (illegitimacy, dependency, voluntary joblessness, family destruction, crime). But what was not obvious to serious-minded people in the sixties, and what is not obvious to serious-minded people in the nineties, is precisely how best to fashion and administer policy responses that make things better.

Senator Moynihan's counsel of realism on welfare does not bar the door on the sorts of far-reaching reforms that many conservatives now favor. But it does hit the facile conservative social engineers of the nineties with a gang of inconvenient facts, figures, and arguments.

To cite just a few of these realities, the 1992 welfare population consisted of 9.2 million children (half under age six, a quarter under age three), and 4.4 million adults, almost all of the adults mothers, under 8 percent of the mothers teenagers. The average AFDC family size has decreased from 4 to 2.9 persons since 1969. The monthly support levels available from AFDC and food stamps have fallen steadily since the late 1960s. In 1993, the average monthly welfare check per family was $373.

As one of the welfare recipients interviewed for an ongoing New Jersey study summed it up, "Almost everything about welfare sucks." That's why most welfare recipients really do try at one point or another to get off the dole. Contrary to popular perceptions of the sort reinforced by FIRST THINGS' editorial, only about 15 percent of welfare recipients stay on welfare continuously for five years or longer. Based on numerous studies, it is absolutely clear that most people who leave welfare for jobs and then return to the welfare rolls do so for legitimate reasons: layoffs, involuntary terminations, loss of child care, individual or family medical problems, loss of housing, domestic violence, and so on.

In short, it is no more true that most welfare recipients are totally lazy, undeserving people than it is true that most prisoners are mere first-time nonviolent criminals.

Likewise, thirty-four million Americans are covered by Medicaid, over half of them children. Research shows that since 1990, were it not for Medicaid, the number of uninsured Americans would have risen from forty-one million to fifty million. After 1965, AFDC and Medicaid together gradually replaced a hit-or-miss system of poverty and health programs sponsored by state and local governments, charities, community hospitals, and public emergency-care facilities for indigent Americans.

As Marvin Olasky has argued so persuasively, the old welfare system had its huge plusses, including getting help to many of those who needed it in a way that was personal, spiritual, and challenging, that bred mutual responsibility, and that averted dependence on impersonal, centralized, government bureaucracies. Still, writ large, the old system could be pretty lousy; in fact, for many depression-era Americans, their children, and their children's children, it was literally a killer.

But whereas the old welfare system failed to make America's poor part of "one nation under God," the new system did more to make America's poor "one nation under HUD." The government-anchored system that replaced the old poverty patchwork has turned out to be just as lousy, just as much a killer—a killer of families, neighborhoods, and individual initiative.

Still, in thinking through welfare reform ideas, we need to look at all the key facts and to keep them straight. One fact is that welfare is not really so costly in dollar terms. For example, in 1993 AFDC (total federal and state spending) cost about $22 billion, not even 1 percent of the gross domestic product. And, warts and all, the federal "welfare state" has dependably delivered food, funds, and medicine to scores of millions of impoverished children, pregnant women, and elderly Americans. That's a lot more than the old system ever did (or could do).

Strictly speaking, the new system did not replace the old, but became a hybrid version of it. Thus, there remains tremendous state-by-state variance not only in how much money welfare and Medicaid recipients actually get but how (and how well) the programs are staffed and administered. Indeed, "welfare" can vary greatly from one county to the next in given states. And the degree to which the "welfare state" is actually a loose confederation of government-assisted private, for-profit, and non-profit organizations (many quite small) has gone largely unnoticed by those who insist that we need to "devolve"

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programs that are already quite devolved, and have always been so. The perverse federal regulations about which conservatives like to groan are quite real, but they have grown up as weeds in a highly devolved, state-centric, government-by-proxy system of program administration.

To date, most efforts to move people from welfare to work have yielded only marginal benefits. Even where Washington has granted carte blanche waivers and gotten out of the way, those welfare-to-work programs that have worked best have normally involved more, not less, per recipient government spending and more, not fewer, administrators and case workers. Anyone who thinks block grants are the answer ought to know that we have had twenty-three of those, fifteen still in effect. Categorical spending has always risen faster than general spending, and Washington strings on social programs will be no less constraining when they are "conservative strings." Senator Moynihan knows all this, and more.

Analytically, the welfare-abortion relationship to which the First Things editorial refers is a supremely complicated tangle, and we may never know one way or the other whether given welfare policy changes increased or decreased the incidence of abortion. Based on my own best understanding of extant theoretical arguments, statistical evidence, and ethnographic observations, I believe, as many Catholic bishops apparently do, that the cuts will probably increase the number of abortions.

As I have written elsewhere, big government is like a big bull in civil society's china shop. It breaks things on the way in and while inside, and we know from experience that it will break things on the way out. Together with Marvin Olasky and others, I believe that civil institutions both can and should do more, government less. But we should be realistic. The problems of making this historic transition are many and severe—one point with which I am finally in agreement with welfare state apologists and the heads of government-supported mega-charities.

At core, Senator Moynihan's counsel of realism is that welfare is a social policy dilemma which admits of no easy answers, including Clinton-style "ending welfare as we know it" and drastic ready-fire-aim Republican proposals. Conservatives, especially religious conservatives, need to manifest a better appreciation for the actual administrative complexities and potential short- and long-run human costs of radical welfare reform measures, including measures that "merely" decrease the rate of spending as the affected populations, young and old, are growing (and as they will continue to grow more rapidly after the year 2002).

In sum, and as Father Neuhaus and most First Things readers would no doubt agree, to discount the moral obligation to protect innocent citizens and society by effectively but humanely restraining known violent and repeat criminals, to deny the efficacy of religion in remaking lives and improving communities, or to mindlessly and heartlessly assume the infinite elasticity of civil institutions in response to new, untested welfare policies and government withdrawal would be to commit a kind of intellectual and moral blasphemy. FT

> It may be remarked here that the famous American phrase "We, the People . . . " is the very negation of Jacobinism. The American concept of government by the people does not attribute to the people the divinity implied in the Revolutionary idea of "the sovereignty of the people"; it simply embodies the ancient principle of consent in a developed and still recognizably Christian sense. The American system neither supposes nor effects an exile of God from society. Finally, the state itself, in its distinction from society, rests on no pretense that even political life can be organized "without any regard for God or for the order established by Him." On the contrary, the Constitution of the U.S. has to be read in the light of the Declaration of Independence, in which there is explicit recognition of God and of an order established by Him—the order of human rights, which is part of the universal moral order to whose imperatives the political order must be obedient.
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> —John Courtney Murray,
> "Leo XIII: Separation of Church and State,"
> *Theological Studies* 14 (June 1953): 160.

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Review Essay

Daniel Goldhagen's Holocaust

Richard John Neuhaus

HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS: ORDINARY GERMANS AND THE HOLOCAUST. *Knopf. 622 pp. $30.*

It must be a heady experience. The son of a distinguished Holocaust scholar at Harvard turns his doctoral dissertation, which won the 1994 award of the American Political Science Association, into a book published and lavishly promoted by one of our most prestigious houses. With the help of effusive praise from noted academics and journalists, it promptly makes its way up the *New York Times* best-seller list. Stanley Hoffmann of Harvard says that *Hitler's Willing Executioners* is "truly revolutionary," and Simon Schama of Harvard declares that this "astonishing, disturbing, and riveting book, the fruit of phenomenal scholarship and absolute integrity, will permanently change the debate on the Holocaust." A. M. Rosenthal writes in the *Times* that reading the book was for him a formative experience comparable to his first visit to Auschwitz at the end of the war. The book quickly became the subject of academic symposia and television chatters. As they say in the book business, a launch can't get much more spectacular than this.

Not everybody, however, has been so enthusiastic about Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's revisionist history of the Holocaust. In fact, it has been subjected to sharp, even withering, criticism by other Holocaust scholars. Before addressing the book and its critics, it is worth noting what is at stake in the controversy sparked by Goldhagen. Scholarly reputations are at stake, to be sure, but this is much more than another spat among academic specialists. The Holocaust is, as I have written elsewhere, our only culturally available icon of absolute evil.

One may argue that it should not be that. After all, just in this century there was Stalin, who killed many more people than Hitler, and Mao, who killed more than both of them combined. But they are disputed icons of evil, since they have had, and still do have, their ideological apologists, while Hitler, except for certified kooks, has not. In addition, Stalin, Mao, and the likes of Pol Pot are foreign and exotic. They are not part of "our" cultural story, while the horrific deeds of the Third Reich were perpetrated at the heart—some would say the apex—of Western civilization. The Germans were and are very much like us.

That is the chief reason why the Holocaust has been the subject of books, articles, novels, films, and plays beyond numbering. In coming to understand the Holocaust, it is said, we come to understand ourselves and our capacity for evil. Daniel Goldhagen, however, would have us believe that the Germans are not like us. The Germans are like nobody else except the Germans. Whatever his intention, he joins the Holocaust revisionists and deniers in inviting us to believe that we can forget it.

In the many challenges raised to the argument of *Hitler's Willing Executioners,* there has been a puzzling neglect of religion's part in creating German anti-Semitism, and of the role of the churches in the Third Reich. This despite the fact that Goldhagen repeatedly returns to the subject of religion and the churches. (In fact, the book is outrageously repetitious, making one wonder whether Knopf, too, has dispensed with the service of editors.) Goldhagen insists on "how important it is for us to focus on the Christian churches when trying to understand the nature of anti-Semitism in Germany during the Nazi period." And not only during the Nazi period, as we shall see.

The consensus among Holocaust scholars seems to be that Goldhagen has not come up with any new findings of significance. He has reworked familiar material to serve his argumentative purposes and, according to his much-irritated academic colleagues,

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has greatly exaggerated the importance of a few less-familiar documents. His argument, tediously repeated in 468 pages of text and more than a 120 pages of notes, can be simply stated. From at least the early nineteenth century, the German people were possessed by "eliminationist" anti-Semitism. With almost no exceptions, Germans wanted to eliminate Jews from Germany, and maybe from the world. Hitler was nothing new. He merely provided Germans with the means to achieve their goal through "exterminationist" anti-Semitism. Germans did not have to be persuaded or coerced to participate in carrying out the Holocaust. They were ready, willing, and indeed eager to take part in this long-desired enterprise.

Goldhagen dismisses Hannah Arendt's "banality of evil," with its depiction of Eichmann and other bloodless bureaucrats efficiently running the machinery of death. Just the opposite was the case, he says. The killing of Jews was a popular undertaking, almost a national sport. Hitler gave people the opportunity to do what they had wanted to do all along. Ordinary Germans revelled in the bloodbath of exterminating six million Jews. The subtitle is *Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust.* Goldhagen usefully highlights documents showing that some of those who did the actual killing did take pleasure and pride in their work. Holocaust scholar Christopher Browning studied the same documents and wrote a book called *Ordinary Men.* No, contends Goldhagen, they were not ordinary men, they were ordinary Germans. It is a German thing. You wouldn't understand.

Goldhagen's thesis denies rational access to the Holocaust. He compares German anti-Semitism with Captain Ahab, who was possessed by the irrational passion to avenge himself against Moby Dick. He quotes Melville: "All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonism of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab were visibly personified and made practically assailable in Moby Dick." As with Ahab and the whale, so with Germans and the Jews.

In a typical assertion, Goldhagen says of the battalions that slaughtered Jews by the thousands on the death marches: "The conclusions drawn about the overall character of the members' actions can, indeed must, be generalized to *the German people in general.* What these *ordinary* Germans did also could have been expected of other *ordinary* Germans." (Emphasis his.) A long book closes with this sentence: "The inescapable truth is that, regarding Jews, German political culture had evolved to the point where an enormous number of ordinary, representative Germans became—and most of the rest of their fellow Germans were fit to be—Hitler's willing executioners." This is collective guilt on a grand scale. His "most of the rest" includes just about everybody, for Goldhagen is loath to acknowledge any exceptions at all.

An alternative reading of those not-so-far-away events is offered by Clive James, writing in the *New Yorker*: "The Nazis didn't just allow a lethal expression of vengeful fantasy; they rewarded it. They deprived a readily identifiable minority of German citizens of their citizenship, declared open season on them, honored anyone who attacked them, punished anyone who helped them, and educated a generation to believe its long-harbored family prejudices had the status of a sacred mission. To puzzle over the extent of the cruelty that was thus unleashed is essentially naive. To marvel at it, however, is inevitable, and pity help us if we ever become blasé about the diabolical landscape whose contours Goldhagen redraws."

The criticisms of the Goldhagen thesis fall into several categories: He misrepresents the pre-Nazi history of Germany, as well as the attitudes and actions of non-Germans during the Holocaust; he ignores the realities that prevented effective German resistance to Hitler's diabolical plan; he promotes a deterministic view of history; he inadvertently absolves Hitler and the Nazis of their crimes; and he nullifies the moral significance of the Holocaust for subsequent history.

Critics point out that Goldhagen's claim about the long-standing anti-Semitic obsession of Germany makes inexplicable the fact that, beginning in the early nineteenth century, Germany was ahead of some other European nations in granting full citizenship rights to Jews. For a very long time, Germany was thought to be a peculiarly hospitable and secure place for Jews. Writing in the *New Republic,* Omer Bartov observes, "If we are to accept Goldhagen's version, German Jews were either blind or downright stupid, since the writing was on the wall for one hundred years and their whole existence was an illusion." Even in the early years of the Nazi era, Hannah Arendt wrote, only a madman could have predicted what was coming. Goldhagen cites a few people who did early on predict something like the Holocaust, and in hindsight they seem prescient. At the time, however, they were thought to be hysterical, and with good reason. Historians write by hindsight and thus can, if so inclined, posture as very superior to those caught in the confusions of living in the present. Daniel Goldhagen is so inclined.

Clive James emphasizes that, if the eliminationist anti-Semitism of the Germans made them so eager to embrace the exterminationist anti-Semitism of the Nazis, it is hard to explain why Hitler and his henchmen thought it necessary to hide their plans from the German people. Only under wartime conditions of secrecy and absolute control did the exterminationist machinery of the Holocaust go into action. It is only, writes James, Goldhagen's "unquenchable ire"

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against the German people that explains his overlooking such obvious evidence against his thesis. "The answer to the nagging conundrum of how a civilized country like Germany could produce the Holocaust," says James, "is that Germany ceased to be civilized from the moment Hitler came to power. It had been before, and it has been since." That is the argument conveyed in the title of a famous *Commentary* article by Milton Himmelfarb, "No Hitler, No Holocaust." Anti-Semitism, said Himmelfarb, was a necessary but not a sufficient cause of the Holocaust. Hitler's "final solution" required Hitler.

If some accounts of the Holocaust have downplayed the enthusiasm with which some Germans participated in Hitler's plan and the number of Germans who were aware of what was happening, critics allow that the Goldhagen book, for all its exaggeration, may help correct that error. But his reckless charge of collective national guilt, they say, is a much greater error. Many Poles, Romanians, Hungarians, and others showed equal enthusiasm for the killing of Jews, and the very civilized French of the Vichy regime over-filled their quotas in rounding up Jews for extermination. Under extraordinary circumstances, "ordinary men," whether German or not, will do extraordinarily evil things. Goldhagen's thesis, says James, "lets Hitler off the hook—and unintentionally reinforces his central belief that it was the destiny of the Jewish race to be expelled from the *Volk* as an inimical presence."

In language not often found in the pages of the *New Yorker,* James says that we cannot understand the Holocaust without reference to "original sin." "Not many of us, in a secular age, are willing to concede that, in the form of Hitler, Satan visited the Earth, recruited an army of sinners, and fought and won a battle against God. We would rather talk the language of pseudoscience, which at least seems to bring such cataclysmic events to order." It is easier and more comforting to blame the German people and their peculiar cultural deformation.

Bartov is concerned that Goldhagen not only lets Hitler off the hook but lets us off the hook. He makes it unnecessary to ask hard questions about ourselves. "What was there (or is there) in our culture that made the concept of transforming humanity by means of eugenic and racial cleansing seem so practical and rational?" The brutality and sadism on which Goldhagen fixes the reader's attention are not qualitatively different from what has happened in other genocides. Bartov writes, "Goldhagen undermines his own claim regarding the uniqueness of the Holocaust, for his book completely misses precisely those aspects of the genocide which have made it stand out as unprecedented even in the bloodiest century humanity has seen; and by doing so it fails to demonstrate any understanding for the profound and continuing relevance of the industrial killing perfected by the Nazis for our own societies."

In short, Goldhagen tells us what we want to hear. *They* did it because *they* are so completely unlike us. In this view, the utter singularity of German anti-Semitism made the Holocaust inevitable. "But," observes James, "the moment when a historian says that something had to happen is the moment when he stops writing history and starts predicting the past." If Goldhagen is right about the uniquely German cause of the Holocaust, the rest of us need never again say, "Never again!"

As mentioned earlier, Goldhagen puts Christianity and the German churches at the heart of his story. "The underlying need to think ill of Jews, to hate them, to derive meaning from this emotional stance," Goldhagen writes, is "woven into the fabric of Christianity itself." "Without a doubt, the definition of the moral order as a Christian one" makes anti-Semitism essential to "the foundational Christian cause." The usual Christian suspects are invoked, including John Chrysostom's fourth-century rants against the Jews, but Goldhagen appears to be entirely unaware of scholarship such as Robert L. Wilken's *John Chrysostom and the Jews,* which demonstrates that at that time in the empire Christian minorities were frequently in reaction to what they perceived as threats from the much more established Jewish community. Never mind. In Goldhagen's view, Chrysostom was writing speeches for Josef Goebbels.

Similarly, Goldhagen uncritically buys into the William Shirer (*The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*) version of Martin Luther's anti-Semitism and its responsibility for the Holocaust. Luther said some scandalous things about Jews, but he was not the principled and passionate anti-Semitic "hero" that the Nazis made him out to be, which was the portrayal embraced by Shirer and now perpetuated by Goldhagen. He is apparently unfamiliar with works such as Uwe Siemon-Netto's *The Fabricated Luther: The Rise and Fall of the Shirer Myth,* which present a more complex understanding both of Luther's views and the exploitation of Luther by the Nazis. Emil Fackenheim has written that we must not grant Hitler posthumous victories. That is precisely what Goldhagen does in agreeing with the Nazis that Christianity in general and Lutheranism in particular are of necessity anti-Semitic.

Moreover, the author fails to appreciate that all the other nations of Europe were equally the heirs of the Christian legacy that, he says, is the irredeemable carrier of the anti-Semitic disease, yet only Germany seems to have contracted it. In fact, the other nations were more unequivocally Christian since, while the Nazis exploited for propaganda purposes whatever they could find of anti-Semitism in the Christian tradition, National Socialism itself was stridently anti-Christian, appealing to the pagan myths of Aryan superiority against a Christianity fatally corrupted

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by its Jewish origins. Also striking is Goldhagen's repeated and unfavorable contrast of Germany with the Scandinavian countries, and yet they were every bit as Lutheran as Protestant Germany. Here, as at so many other points, Goldhagen's argument, upon closer examination, crumbles into incoherence.

Goldhagen says flatly, "The churches welcomed the Nazis' ascendancy to power." They were, he says, conservative institutions that hoped Hitler would free them from the confusions of the Weimar Republic and from the Socialist and Communist parties "which threatened to rob the churches of their power and influence." In his "unquenchable ire," he lets nothing get in the way of his indictment of Germany and Christianity. His notes cite a few secondary sources on the churches during this period, but his account is untouched by the more nuanced judgments of, for instance, Guenter Lewy's writing on Catholicism under the Nazis. Nowhere in Goldhagen do we find reference to authoritative texts such as Klaus Scholder's *The Churches and the Third Reich*. Some Protestant theologians of a "progressive" stripe did in the 1920s develop a "political theology" that was sympathetic to the Nazis, but in judging what they and others did in that period Scholder offers the salutary caution that we should remember that "they still had Hitler to come, while we have him behind us."

Goldhagen rightly deplores the fact that during the Nazi period the churches, Catholic and Protestant, did not officially condemn the extermination program or stand up for the rights of Jews. Christians in Germany have been reproaching themselves for that for fifty years. They do not need to be informed of the fact by a bright young American academic who had not yet been born into his privileged existence at the time when religious leaders living under a ruthless and totalitarian tyranny failed to muster the courage to be martyrs. Nobody then doubted for a moment that the penalty for doing what Goldhagen says they should have done was imprisonment and death. Goldhagen's claim that everybody knew what Hitler had in mind and later knew about the extermination underway is unsupported by evidence. His egregious and self-righteous condemnation of those who did know but failed to be heroes is indecent, while his vaunted scholarship that ignores the actual circumstances of the churches at the time can only be described as shoddy.

It is simply not true to say that the churches welcomed the ascendancy of the Nazis. A very small minority of Protestant pastors did welcome the ascendancy, identifying with the "German Christian" movement by which Hitler planned to take over the Protestant church and, later, the Catholic. That is what the church leaders feared, and they reacted with a confused alarm that soon led Hitler to postpone his grandiose ecclesiastical ambitions to a more convenient time. Those who protested the treatment of Jews were put on no uncertain notice. For instance, already in 1934, on the eve of the announced boycott of Jewish businesses, clergy and anyone else who expressed disagreement were told by the regime: "The government of national revolution does not exist in a vacuum. It represents the creative German *Volk*. Anyone who attacks it, attacks Germany! Anyone who slanders it, slanders the nation!"

Then and later, the persecution of Jews was very much on the mind of many church leaders. It is no excuse but it is the fact that they had much else on their minds as well. Catholic and Protestant leaders were in a state of panic, faced by a regime that threatened to destroy the independence of the churches by taking over their schools, youth organizations, finances, and means of communication. Klaus Scholder is no apologist for the churches' complicity, if only by their silence, in the persecution and, later, the extermination of Jews. But already in the first year of Hitler's dictatorship the pattern was set: "It seemed all the more inconceivable to issue a statement against the persecution of the Jews when a conflict with the state was looming in the sphere of church politics, and in no circumstances did anyone want to be exposed on two fronts at the same time." We who have Hitler behind us can condemn that decision. They could not believe what was to come. Their strategy was not noble, it was not heroic, it was not right. It is, alas, very understandable.

Daniel Goldhagen, the relentless prosecutor, is not interested in understanding. Worse, he brazenly trims the evidence to fit his case. Repeatedly he points to a 1941 statement (when any hint of public resistance to Hitler had been brutally crushed) in which seven regional Protestant churches "declared the Jews to be incapable of being saved by baptism, owing to their racial constitution." That is not what the statement said. The source he cites makes clear that the statement said that baptism could not change the biological and legal status of Jews. He is right in asserting that many church leaders shamefully distanced themselves also from Jews who were their baptized brothers and sisters in Christ, but it is preposterous to claim that the churches taught that Jews could not be saved or that their being baptized was sacramentally ineffectual. Goldhagen's determination to convict all Germans, combined with his manifest ignorance of Christian teaching, results in blunders that would severely embarrass a more conscientious scholar.

For Goldhagen anti-Semitism is everything, which makes one of the most striking oddities of the book its hopeless confusion about what constitutes anti-Semitism. The one thing for sure, repeated many times over, is that anti-Semitism is utterly "irrational." No doubt there is a strong element of irrationality in such prejudice, but in Goldhagen's theory there is absolutely no rational access to the

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phenomenon, just as there is no rational access to Ahab's obsession with Moby Dick. Paradoxically, it turns out that anti-Semitism has nothing to do with Jews. "Anti-Semitism draws fundamentally on cultural sources that are *independent* of the Jews' nature and actions." "It makes little sense to discuss the real nature of a bigotry's object. . . . To do so would surely be to muddle the understanding of prejudice—in this case, of anti-Semitism." Put differently, Jews in Germany were nonexistent except as the object of hatred on the part of non-Jews.

This astonishing theory explains the complete absence of any discussion of the actual history of Jews in Germany, including the Weimar Republic that was the prelude to the Nazi ascendancy. A chronicler as favorable to the Jews as Paul Johnson (*A History of the Jews*) discusses the ways in which Hitler was able to exploit the perceived cultural dominance of Jews in the Weimar period. "The Weimar Republic was born of defeat, indissolubly linked with defeat, and, in the minds of most Germans, associated with Jews, the *Judenrepublik*. From beginning to end it was a millstone round the Jewish neck." It is not true, as the deeply anti-Christian George Steiner boasts, that Weimar and indeed the sensibilities of modernity were the creation of Jews and homosexuals, but Hitler was able to exploit the perception of Jewish responsibility for defeatism and decadence because the perception was there to be exploited, and was not entirely unrelated to reality.

Johnson denies that Jews were culturally "dominant," but—in theater, film, publishing, and the arts generally—Jews were influential all out of proportion to their number (about 1 percent of the German population), and the influence was overwhelmingly on the side of the anti-bourgeois leftist intelligentsia. "From the start," says Johnson, "the media violence from the left played into the hands of anti-Semites." The journal *Weltbühne* "aroused enormous controversy because of its deliberate attacks on everything right-thinking Germans held dear." One of its leading figures, Kurt Tucholsky, wrote, "There is no secret of the German army which I would not hand over readily to a foreign power," and suggested that all right-thinking (that is, left-thinking) Jews agreed with him.

There is a huge literature on the role of Jews in Weimar by scholars such as Istvan Deak, Harold Poor, and Walter Laqueur. These writers are not "blaming the victim" when they note the ways in which the victimizer was able to exploit the reality and exaggerated perception of Jews in Weimar. Yet the actual history of this period is entirely absent from Goldhagen's book. That is explained by his curious theory that anti-Semitism has nothing to do with Jews. But in the absence of history it is impossible to explain the rise of Hitler.

Goldhagen for the prosecution is remorseless. Anti-Semitism explains everything and everybody was anti-Semitic. "German society, both in the first and the second half of the nineteenth century, was axiomatically anti-Semitic." Axiomatic as in self-evident. No evidence is needed. Only an anti-Semite would question the axiom, therefore to question the axiom is to prove it. We are told that those who thought Jews were "different" thereby proved that they were anti-Semitic, whereas those who denied that Jews were "different" thereby proved that they, too, were anti-Semitic. Although he does not say so, it would seem that even Jews who urged the suppression of difference in order to assimilate, as well as Jews who insisted that Jews should be different, were anti-Semites. Goldhagen expresses particular scorn for philo-Semites who were anti-Semitic because they denied that they were anti-Semites. This is incoherence of a high order.

It is not only incoherent; it is vulgar and mean-spirited. Karl Barth was perhaps the greatest Protestant theologian of this century. He wrote powerfully about the divinely ordered bond between Christians and Jews and was a leading spirit of the Confessing Church that boldly resisted Hitler. Goldhagen observes that Barth once confessed in a very private letter to a friend "that in personal encounters with living Jews . . . I have always, so long as I can remember, had to suppress a totally irrational aversion." Barth knew the aversion was both irrational and sinful. He fought against it and, according to those who knew him, overcame it. None of this matters to Goldhagen, who, on the basis of one line in a private letter, demands conviction: "Karl Barth was also an anti-Semite."

The man is without shame. He acknowledges that "ethical objections to genocide were most prominent among members of the religious leadership." And prominent among those who protested was Theophil Wurm, president of the Protestant church in Württemberg. As late as the end of 1943 he risked the wrath of the regime by writing on behalf of the Jews to one of the top Nazis. He said that he and like-minded church leaders were not motivated "by any philo-Semitic inclinations, but simply by religious and ethical feelings." Aha! Goldhagen pounces on this as proof that Wurm, too, subscribed to "the regnant demonizing conception of Jewry." In trying to influence a regime whose most fundamental dogma was anti-Semitism, Wurm should presumably have declared himself a philo-Semite!

Among those who resisted Hitler, there is no more morally luminous a figure than Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran pastor who rescued Jews and was executed on the direct orders of the Fuehrer in April 1945. It is too much to expect that the "unquenchable ire" of Daniel Goldhagen would spare Bonhoeffer. In 1943, he reports with vindictive glee, Bonhoeffer was part of a group that drew up a document including a discussion of the "Jewish problem." "Although it

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explicitly condemned the genocide," says Goldhagen, "the document's debt to eliminationist anti-Semitism is unmistakable." The evidence, of course, is that Bonhoeffer and others thought there was a "Jewish problem."

In a country where, according to Goldhagen, Jews were for centuries the obsessional centerpiece of cultural consciousness, and that had now produced a government that was butchering Jews by the millions, there was no Jewish problem. Elsewhere Goldhagen contends that anyone who spoke about the "Jewish question" convicted himself as an anti-Semite. But of course: it is "axiomatic" that Germans are anti-Semites. In Goldhagen's telling, there was no Jewish question; there was only the question of the irrational hatred of Jews.

In page after vindictive page, Goldhagen attacks and attacks again until every figure of supposed integrity is caught up in the categorical net of "Hitler's willing executioners." Never mind the vast literature on the resistance, on the thousands of heroic rescuers of Jews, on the "righteous Gentiles" honored at the Yad Vashem memorial in Jerusalem. If they were German, they were anti-Semites. Anti-Semitism, Goldhagen declares, is Germany's "permanent condition," only its "expression" varies from time to time.

So what about today's Germany? The answer is buried 118 pages into the footnotes, where we are told that "although Germany continues to this day to remain infected by anti-Semitism," Germans became "democrats" as it "became ever more difficult for them to maintain a demonized image of Jews, even if many Germans continued not to like Jews." And then this: "That absurd beliefs can rapidly dissipate is well known." Where does that leave the entire argument of the book that anti-Semitism is axiomatic and the permanent condition of Germans? It is stretching charity to conclude, on the basis of a footnote on page 594, that at the end of his project Daniel Goldhagen abandoned his absurd beliefs and irrational hatred of Germans. That would have required rewriting his doctoral dissertation from scratch.

Contra Goldhagen, as long as there are Jews, there will be a "Jewish question." And St. Paul suggests (Romans 9-11) that there will be Jews until the End Time. The great Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) insisted that the Jew remains a permanent question, an anomaly, "this stranger who resists the continued attempts to assimilate him to a nation's own idealization." A Jew who considered and rejected conversion, Rosenzweig wrote, "Before God, then, Jew and Christian both labor at the same task. He cannot dispense with either. He has set enmity between the two for all time and withal has most intimately bound each to each. . . . Thus both of us, they as much as we, we as much as they, are creatures precisely for the reason that we do not see the whole truth. Just for this we remain within the boundaries of mortality. Just for this—we remain (*bleiben wir*)."

After Hitler and because of Hitler, six million fewer Jews remained. In the fifty years since, many Christians and some Jews have come to understand much more deeply the sources of what Rosenzweig terms the enmity and the bond between us. The Jewish question remains because, thank God, Jews remain. In America, too, there are anti-Semites who propose solutions, if not a "final solution," to the Jewish question. They are and, please God, will continue to be a fringe phenomenon. Much more important, we in America, Jews and Christians, have the singular responsibility and opportunity to work out a way of remaining together in mutual respect and unquestioned security. For that common task we receive no help whatever from the incoherent, hateful, and dishonest tract that is *Hitler's Willing Executioners.* FT

> Consciously and unconsciously democracy is being transformed into the political and social organization of a great error, whose source is in the pagan darkness that always lingers, never fully clarified, in the mind of man. I mean the ancient idolatrous error of the self-sufficient man, who regards himself as sole architect of his own freedom, single author of the values that govern his life, ultimate judge of right and wrong, true and false.
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> —John Courtney Murray, "The School and Christian Freedom," *Proceedings of the National Catholic Educational Association* 48 (August 1951): 64.

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Music

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SACRED MUSIC OF THE 20TH CENTURY. *LAL-2001, Life Art, Ltd. 129 Grandview Terrace, Box 300, Lakeside, MT 59922.*

Reviewed by **Terry Teachout**

THE MOST UNEXPECTED classical music recording I've run across recently is *Sacred Music of the 20th Century*, a compact disc chiefly devoted to a cantata by John Boyle called *Requiem for the Unborn.* This work, composed in 1995 and recorded by Kurt Sprenger, the Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Warsaw National Chorus, was released on a label called Life Art, Ltd., described in the liner notes as "a special corporation to support and encourage the development of contemporary symphonic music that combines the highest moral, spiritual, and artistic values." The notes go on to say that Boyle, a composer born in 1952 about whom I knew nothing prior to hearing this CD, "is currently working on an oratorio dealing with the tragic consequences from the breakup of the family. This work, which is in keeping with Boyle's concern with social morals and keen interest in spiritual themes, is due to be completed by late 1996."

All of which is, to put it mildly, leading with the chin. I know of no group of people in the United States more reflexively liberal than classical musicians, and none more unanimous in the belief that abortion should remain legal and wholly unrestricted in its availability. It is worth noting that this performance was recorded in Poland by Polish musicians; I think it safe to say that no American musician of repute would have taken part, other than anonymously, in performing or recording such a piece of music. I feel no less safe in predicting that this CD will not be played on any nonreligious radio station, or sold in any chain store. As far as the classical music community is concerned, *Requiem for the Unborn* will be an unpiece.

One may usefully contrast the reception of a new work by Elliot Goldenthal, a composer born in 1954 who is scarcely better known than John Boyle, called *Fire Water Paper: A Vietnam Oratorio.* This piece, commissioned in 1993 by the Pacific Symphony Orchestra, was performed not long ago at Carnegie Hall, and has been recorded by Sony, one of the largest classical labels in the world. The public performance featured Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony; the Sony recording features the cellist Yo-Yo Ma. I am writing prior to the Carnegie Hall performance, and so I do not know how *Fire Water Paper* will be received by the critics. But I do know the piece *will* be received, by which I mean that the New York premiere will be covered by the *New York Times*, and the CD reviewed by those major publications that run record reviews.

ANYONE SURPRISED by any of this has obviously not been reading FIRST THINGS very closely. America is engaged in a culture war, and abortion is among the most important battlegrounds in that war. Those who support abortion are ordinarily portrayed in the mass media as right-thinking centrists, those who oppose it as bigoted fanatics; as Ross Perot likes to say, it's just that simple.

It is, in fact, so simple that it isn't very interesting. For me, the interesting part is not whether anybody in the classical music business is going to pay any attention to *Requiem for the Unborn*: that is, as Generation X says, a no-brainer. As a conservative and a Christian who is also a practicing critic of the fine arts, I am much more interested in whether or not *Requiem for the Unborn* is any good—and, more generally, whether any such piece of music, whatever its ideology, can possibly be any good.

The latter question is not as simple as it looks. Most of the conservatives who take an interest in the fine arts would twitch their noses disapprovingly at any left-wing composer who affected to be concerned with "social morals." Why, then, should we be less tough on a composer who, to invert T. S. Eliot's formulation, does the wrong thing for the right reason? And while we're on the subject, what kind of music incorporates "moral, spiritual, and artistic values," anyway? Isn't music supposed to belong to a "wholly other" realm of existence in which such matters have no place?

The truth, of course, is that classical music, however elusive its essence, is nonetheless deeply rooted in Western religious practice. Putting aside the vast body of music written specifically for liturgical use by major composers ranging from Palestrina to Stravinsky, countless sacred texts (most notably the mass), have been appropriated as quasi-theatrical vehicles by composers who in many cases were agnostic or atheistic (Berlioz, Verdi, and Vaughan Williams come immediately to mind). Even in this reflexively secular age, nobody questions the musical validity of such compositions merely because they use religious texts. Moreover, we have lately seen an explosion of popular interest in contemporary classical music that has an explicitly spiritual aspect; indeed, the worldwide response to the music of Henryk Górecki, John Tavener, and Arvo Pärt (who have come to be known collectively as the holy minimalists) is beyond question *the* classical music success story of the 1990s.

WHY, THEN, should anyone have a problem with a *Requiem for the Unborn*? The easy answer, as always, comes easily: the issue of abortion has been politicized, and politics and art do not mix. Great art seeks to address all people everywhere, while politicized art is in practice limited in reach to those who already agree with its animating premises, or are at the very least undecided about them. That a piece of music called *Requiem for the Unborn* is in this sense "propagandistic" is beyond argument: its purpose is to strengthen the convic-

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TERRY TEACHOUT *is the music critic of* Commentary. *He is writing a biography of H. L. Mencken.*

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tions of those listeners who already agree with it, and to change the minds of those who do not. Most of the great religious music of the premodern era, by contrast, was not composed to incline its listeners toward Christianity (though some of it did, and still does), any more than Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was composed to convert its listeners to some nineteenth-century version of secular humanism. What it *was* composed to do is more problematic, the function of music never having been adequately defined, but the simplest answer is that given by Bach: its beauty glorifies God.

Only in the twentieth century did major composers get into the propaganda business, and then their preferred causes tended to be not religious but secular. World War II saw a plethora of pieces by American composers whose subject matter was not religion, or music, but politics. Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* (1942), Randall Thompson's *The Testament of Freedom* (1943), even Paul Hindemith's *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd* (1946): all these works, and many others like them, exist not to glorify God but to exalt what we have learned to call the civic religion. The Soviets deliberately bent their great composers to superficially similar ends—it is impossible to count the number of patriotic potboilers churned out under duress by Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich—and Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* (1962), in which the text of the requiem mass is commingled with the pacifist-homoerotic poetry of Wilfred Owen, was among the biggest classical-music "hits" of the postwar era. In more recent years, we have had Ned Rorem's *Whitman Cantata* (1983), bound in a lavender cover; John Corigliano's First Symphony (1990), now universally known as the *AIDS Symphony;* and Libby Larsen's *Missa Gaia: Mass for the Earth* (1992), a work which, according to the composer, "adopts the form and spirit of the traditional Mass and replaces the texts with words addressing human beings' relationship to the Earth."

What most (though not all) of these works have in common is that they are occasional pieces, few of which have had any significant life beyond the secular occasions for which they were composed. But the "occasion" for *Requiem for the Unborn* is, at least potentially, of much greater interest. *Requiem for the Unborn* is about death, and the particular cause of death singled out by the composer clearly has moral and ethical dimensions compatible with serious art. By way of comparison, it would be quite possible (though it might also be quite difficult) to compose a serious opera about the Holocaust, or a serious oratorio about slavery in America. Indeed, the most musically successful oratorio of the twentieth century, Sir Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time* (1941), is a meditation on *Kristallnacht* in which the Lutheran chorales of Bach's passion settings are replaced by Negro spirituals—a device that sounds trite in the telling, but which in practice is almost unbearably moving.

IS ABORTION a subject similarly suitable to the making of serious art? To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever tried to write a "pro-choice" cantata: merely to broach the idea is to recognize its utter absurdity. Yet the converse, no matter how repugnant it may be to the sensibilities of most contemporary American musicians, is by no means comparably absurd. If it was possible for Benjamin Britten to write a good requiem whose message is that war is evil, why should it necessarily be impossible for John Boyle to write a good requiem whose message is that abortion is evil?

The point is that what *ought* to matter most in the end is the artistic quality of *Requiem for the Unborn*, and here I must render a mixed verdict. *Requiem for the Unborn* is a half-hour-long cantata divided into four sections: "Death," "Hell" (which contains an instrumental interlude called "Dance of the Devil"), "The Void" (in which an aborted fetus despairs of its fate), and "Redemption." The musical idiom, which is conservative but not reactionary, is more or less the sort of thing one might have heard from an English or American composer of the 1930s, with one or two avant-garde devices thrown in for good measure. I found the first two movements competent but unmemorable, the third impressive and highly memorable, the fourth patchy and saccharine—not a bad average for an unknown composer.

But while *Requiem for the Unborn* is good enough to be judged on its not inconsiderable merits, these merits unfortunately do not include the text. "Hell" is based on lines drawn from *The Divine Comedy;* the remaining movements are settings of verses by the composer and an unidentified writer named Terry Jimmerson, and they are not good. The last movement, which the anonymous author of the liner notes describes as expressive of "the forgiving and merciful nature of God," is especially mawkish: *Now is the time to put life back into / Life. / Leading the children who can't / Come this way on their own. / Give them the wisdom to bring forth / The good of this life / You've been shown.* Given the extent to which the quality of the text is central to the effect of a work of this kind, the average listener, however sympathetic, is likely to conclude, as I did, that *Requiem for the Unborn* simply doesn't add up to an artistically convincing whole.

BUT WHAT IF the text had been better? What if the music had been more consistently compelling? And why does the work as it stands now, worthy though it undeniably is, leave me with a distinctly queasy feeling? It isn't as though I think art more important than life, or that it should be treated with the respect due to revealed religion. And even if I did, the fact would still remain that the existence of one little pro-life cantata hardly threatens the continuing validity of, say, the *Missa Solemnis*: the autonomy of art is not dependent on the suppression of works by artists who prefer politics to abstraction. John Boyle has as much right to compose a half-hour-long cantata about abortion—or, for that matter, an evening-long oratorio about the

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consequences of the breakup of the nuclear family—as Elliot Goldenthal has to compose an oratorio about Vietnam.

All this is crystal clear. What is less clear is why I am bothered by the whole idea of *Requiem for the Unborn*, why I would very much prefer that it had never been composed or recorded, whatever its artistic and moral merits. I can offer only a partial explanation for my discomfort: at a time when political correctness has become for many Americans the chief criterion of artistic "excellence," it troubles me to see conservatives, be they political or religious, traveling down the same narrow path toward the same bloody crossroads, no matter how tentatively, or how good their reasons.

But that probably says more about me—and, more important, about the way in which the debate over abortion has driven a wedge into the soul of America—than it does about the well-made, well-meaning music of John Boyle.

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Books In Review

Thinking Big

THE END OF THE NATION-STATE. By JEAN-MARIE GUÉHENNO. Translated by Victoria Elliott. *University of Minnesota Press. 145 pp. $19.95.*

***Reviewed by* A. J. Bacevich**

THIS IS A VERY small book with very large aspirations. As a display of intellectual panache, it is also unmistakably European—the literary equivalent of a sleek fashion model gliding down the runway in Paris or Milan: thin, elegant, insouciant, slightly world-weary, and quite without visible means of support.

Unencumbered by evidence, data, or corroboration, *The End of the Nation-State* is an exercise in Big Think. The stated aim of Jean-Marie Guéhenno, a senior member of the French diplomatic corps, is to divine the zeitgeist of the new age emerging from the political and cultural upheaval revealed by the end of the Cold War. The result is less a tightly argued brief than a jumble of audacious speculations and bold assertions—some quite intriguing. In short, for those not put off by a whiff of Continental affectation, this book merits careful reading.

That 1989 marked an abrupt turning point in history has already established itself as a familiar cliché. Guéhenno accepts the cliché but gives it his own twist. What came to a halt in 1989, in his view, was not simply the Cold War or communism, but the era of the nation-state. We find ourselves today, writes the author, "living in the prehistory" of a new epoch, the product of economic globalization and the rapid spread of information technologies.

In the United States, figures as dissimilar as Bill Gates, Newt Gingrich, and Al Gore hype these phenomena as unalloyed blessings. Guéhenno is not so sure: Rather than perfecting our dreams of peace, prosperity, and freedom, in his view, they will subvert a political order that we have come to take for granted, ending the dominance of the nation-state just as the nation-state once superseded the authority of the Church.

WITH THE ONSET of a global information society, according to Guéhenno, boundaries become meaningless. The importance of territory dwindles. Belief in a collective destiny linking those sharing a common past disappears. As a result, traditional precepts rooted in that destiny become obsolete. Only information retains value. Calcified by habit and routine, the nation-state is ill-equipped to cope with this radically transformed environment. Even now, according to Guéhenno, the power formerly claimed by the state is shifting to a new medium of influence and authority: an impalpable but pervasive network of networks.

This demise of the nation-state signals the demise of conventional politics, a process already well advanced. What we mistake today for politics is mere procedure, activity with "no other object than the preservation of the rules of the game, the only agreed operating standard of a society without a goal." Politics survives only to the extent that it facilitates the operation of the network: reducing uncertainty, lowering transaction costs, and increasing "transparence." Thus, in the age of the network—"a world that is at once unified and deprived of a center"—process replaces purpose.

Indeed, process is just about all that counts. Real influence resides in the hands of the lobbyists and lawyers who shape the intricate regulations that facilitate the network's unimpeded operation. We live in an age,

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observes Guéhenno, in which "the deal is hallowed as the only truth."

The role of professional politicians and their collaborators in the media is hardly more than theater, the management of "an ephemeral succession of perceptions, as the media choose to stage them." Yet this theater is not entirely without purpose. Proffering a constant diet of novelty and trivia diverts those who might otherwise be tempted to question the new status quo. After all, "an issue not talked about does not exist."

This emasculation of politics reflects the network's aversion to disruption. The new age places a premium on teamwork, uniformity, and passivity. For advanced societies, according to Guéhenno, "conformity is not an accident [or] a regrettable weakness . . . but a necessary condition of their smooth operation." The functioning of the network itself helps to reinforce conformity. "In the place of a structural hierarchy, it offers the benefits of teamwork. Instead of the polarity of power, it prefers an ever more advanced circulation of information, the object of which is to dissolve conflict by a multitude of precautionary microadjustments." The effective operation of the network—the highest imperative—demands that the individual be subsumed. Where Christianity teaches that "each man . . . is a consciousness, and that this consciousness is irreducible," the new age of networks requires the surrender of autonomy. As dedicated servants of the network, we become "people without principles." Our networked age functions "better than any human organization has ever functioned, but no one knows to what end."

Thus, the rise of the network perverts the concept of freedom. Although the advocates of the network promise ever expanding choices, freedom is actually emptied of content. "We are deprived not of liberty," writes Guéhenno, "but of the idea of liberty." "We have the feeling that we have never been as 'free,' and we pity our forefathers, who were subjected to all kinds of constraints that no longer bind us." Living in a time when "there are almost no taboos left," we take pride in having extricated ourselves from the bondage of intolerance and narrow-mindedness. Why then, the author asks, "does this liberty leave a taste of ashes in the mouth?"

For Guéhenno, therefore, the advent of the network gives rise to a system he does not hesitate to brand imperialist. Although velvet-gloved by the brutal standards of the twentieth century, this new imperialism is nonetheless insidious and dehumanizing.

Throughout his book, Guéhenno treats the triumph of this new imperial order as all but foreordained. As "nomads of modernity," we are no match for the technology that we have developed and unleashed. As a result, the author's conclusion—an abrupt summons to the barricades—comes across less as a ringing affirmation of man's primacy than as a forlorn attempt to offer a few crumbs of consolation.

"We have a revolution to accomplish," Guéhenno announces, "and this revolution is not of a political order, but a spiritual one." In the age of the network, he writes, religion must become "the last refuge of meaning."

Alas, the spirituality he proposes is patently bogus. For in calling for a spiritual revolution, the author patiently explains, "one must understand not the belief in a transcendence, a God, of principles, but far more modestly, that sum of rites and what might be called habits . . . [that] shape our behavior." As if to complete the circuit of ironies that will describe this new era—a world without a center, inhabited by people without principles, gagging on freedoms that have lost all meaning—Guéhenno offers this remedy: "religions without God."

"Virtually no one declares himself 'conservative' today," Guéhenno observes at one point, "for no one feels assured enough of the principles worth preserving." No one? As an admission that the last traces of conviction have disappeared from a once-proud intellectual tradition, the remark is a revealing one, perhaps more so than the author intends. Yet for a reader otherwise dazzled by grand pronouncements and pithy aphorisms, it puts the book nicely into perspective. Although *The End of the Nation-State* stands as a tribute to a residual capacity for analysis, it also constitutes a final abdication of any European claim to intellectual authority. "No one" will want to take its bleak diagnosis or insipid prescription too seriously.

The Loss of the Family Story

The Abolition of Marriage: How We Destroy Lasting Love. By Maggie Gallagher. *Regnery. 300 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Kari Jenson Gold**

Maggie Gallagher's newest book, *The Abolition of Marriage,* is a

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tough, passionate account of the thirty-year dismemberment of what she calls our most heroic human institution, marriage. In often heartbreaking detail, she tours America since the 1960s, exploring the collapse of marriage and the "culture of divorce."

KARI JENSON GOLD *is a writer and actress living in New York City.*

"From a formal, legal standpoint, marriage is no longer an enforcable commitment," she observes. "The legal, social, and economic supports that sustained marriage over centuries have been dispatched with astonishing speed, and marriage has been reconceived as a purely private act, not a social institution. . . . Thanks to no-fault divorce and the attitudes, norms, and policies that support it, getting married now more closely resembles taking a concubine than taking a wife."

The collapse of marriage, Gallagher shows, is not a natural and inevitable disaster, but rather the result of systematic dismantling by "divorce advocates"—the winners in the sexual revolution, lawyers, therapists, and social scientists. Armed with a barrage of statistics and case studies, she convincingly demonstrates that marriage is an indispensable public institution, the best and safest environment for raising children. Single parenthood, whether brought about by divorce or illegitimacy, is no substitute for the intact family with a mother and a father. The raising of our nation's children is the driving force behind this book.

Exploding the optimistic myth of the "good divorce," Gallagher demonstrates that children of divorce have higher than average levels of youth suicide, lower intellectual and educational performance, more mental illness, violence, and drug use. But even for those families who seem to have weathered divorce, there is "the first and most enduring loss . . . the one that is almost never mentioned, the loss that affects children, parents, and spouses equally: the loss of the family story." Such observations—simple, true, and heartbreaking—are what make this book so compelling.

THE AUTHOR'S INSISTENCE on this "family story," or what she elsewhere calls the "erotic narrative," is perhaps the most interesting and necessary (because so rarely addressed in contemporary culture) part of the book. Again and again, Gallagher reminds us that, contrary to what we have been told by therapists and social scientists, marriage and parenting are not job labels that can be transferred from one employee to the next, but are, rather, "imperatives of eros." By way of illustration, she tells us the story of ten-year-old Melissa, who now lives in a treatment center for disturbed children. She was removed from her parents because, although they had plenty of

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food, they did not feed her. "My parents used to lock me in a closet," says Melissa. "I miss them."

One of the myths routinely used to justify divorce is the fear of child abuse. Indeed, a group of female legislators recently introduced a bill to attach domestic violence warnings to marriage licenses. In fact, notes the author, physical child abuse is most likely to come from a single mother, and the most likely person to commit sexual abuse is the mother's boyfriend or second husband.

It used to be that couples stayed married "for the sake of the children." In the last thirty years, however, we have come to divorce "for the sake of the children." We conveniently assume that our children cannot be happy if we are unhappy, but never that we can't be happy if our children are unhappy. American society has expended enormous amounts of time, energy, and money attempting to justify and manage the effects of divorce. Wouldn't it be wonderful, asks Gallagher, if that same energy, time, and money were to go towards making better marriages rather than better divorces.

If I have any complaint with this book, it is the author's excessive reliance on statistics (often repeating the same ones several times in different chapters). Surely, these are the products of those very social scientists she has wisely taught us to distrust. Far more persuasive is her own fierce prose when she allows herself free rein. "Nasty, poor, brutish, and short is how Hobbes described life in his imagined state of nature," she writes. "The therapeutic gurus don't speak Hobbes' language. Quite the reverse, they are the sultans of schmaltz, the heroes of the hug. . . . But by nurturing a moral code that effectively turns abandonment into a virtue and self-interest into the highest virtue, they create something like Hobbes' hell on earth, in which, lacking any common good to appeal to in dealing with one another, we are driven instead to use selfishness as the currency of all exchange."

Clearly, Ms. Gallagher feels strongly about her subject, and one may wonder if some of her intensity comes from her own experience as an unwed mother. At least, that is what I think I understood from a few easily missable, oddly casual references to her own past. I confess I found these one-sentence personal revelations interesting but jarring. It might have been better to say much more—use her own experience as a sample case study, perhaps—or nothing at all.

Toward the end of her book, the author makes several suggestions for reinvigorating marriage: she advocates ending no-fault divorce, thus returning official support to the partner who wants to preserve the union; once again permitting landlords to discriminate between married and unmarried couples; making marriage a requirement for adoption and foster care; reducing the tax burden on married couples (by tripling dependent exemptions); ending welfare for unmarried minors; and enabling couples to sign prenuptial agreements declaring their marriage permanent. This last, well-intended as it might be, strikes me as a bit bizarre, and potentially another legal and emotional nail in our language about and understanding of marriage. But right or wrong, the specificity and practicality of her ideas deserves commendation.

Maggie Gallagher is politically nonpartisan (indeed she has complaints about both parties) but she is unabashedly Christian. Here she is on love: "To attempt to love just one other person the way God loves everyone. That is the seal, the aim, the substance of the marriage contract. Marriage is the incarnation of eros, the body of love. It is the psalms and the Song of Songs and it is the Crucifixion, or at least it is our aspi-

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ration to all of these things." Statistics, case studies, and thoughtful reasoning all point to the sort of world we are now creating. Could it be that only a fundamentally Christian understanding of love as sacrifice will be able to reverse the destructive course of American society?

Murray's Mantle

BRIDGING THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR: SELECTED WRITINGS OF JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY, S.J. Edited by J. LEON HOOPER, S.J. *Georgetown University Press. 373 pp. $24.95 paper.*

Reviewed by **Joseph A. Komonchak**

JOHN COURTNEY MURRAY published only three books. The first of these, *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960), a collection, slightly edited, of previously published articles, remains the main text around which Murray scholars continue to circle. The second, *The Problem of God* (1964), prints three lectures Murray delivered at Yale during the winter of 1962, and the third, *The Problem of Religious Freedom* (1964), is a slightly expanded version of an article published during the Second Vatican Council.

Apart from his books, Murray published a large number of essays between 1935 and his death in 1967. They cover a broad range: interreligious cooperation, theology for lay people, religious freedom and church-state relations, the First Amendment, public policy, Christian humanism, Catholic education, and sermons and addresses on spiritual topics. In genre they range from the popular to the meditative to the rigorously scholarly.

Besides his published work, Murray wrote a great deal of still unpublished material—much of it in the well catalogued and much consulted Murray archives at Georgetown University, but much of it existing only in far less accessible places. In addition to many unpublished lectures, this material includes a vast correspondence that remains largely unknown. Murray's range of correspondents was large, and it was not rare for him to send them lengthy disquisitions. This unpublished material contains much that is useful for understanding the development of Murray's thought, and it is particularly helpful for information about his wide-ranging reading. (Murray was notoriously uninformative and careless about citations in his published works.)

JOSEPH A. KOMONCHAK *is the John and Gertrude Hubbard Professor of Religious Studies at the Catholic University of America.*

SURPRISINGLY LITTLE has been done to start collecting and editing Murray's writings, but J. Leon Hooper, S.J., has at last made the first move in that direction. Two years ago he published *Religious Liberty: Catholic Struggles with Pluralism*, which collected two of Murray's published essays on Vatican II and religious freedom and provided an English translation of an essay previously available only in Latin. Perhaps most usefully, it printed an article that Murray was denied permission to publish in 1955, in which he both concluded his series of articles on the thought of Leo XIII and defended himself against the kind of interpretations that had led the Holy Office a year before to condemn four propositions thought to reflect his ideas.

Now Hooper has published another collection: *Bridging the Sacred and the Secular: Selected Writings of John Courtney Murray, S.J.* Under five headings (Civil Law: National and International; Christian Humanism; Doctrines at the Cutting Edge; Christianity and Atheism; Ecumenism), it collects twenty-eight essays previously published in widely scattered places, three lectures

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never published before, the press report of a speech, and a private memorandum. One may be grateful to have all this now in a single volume, but even our gratitude makes us ask why the publication of Murray's writings does not proceed more systematically and more critically.

As Hooper's brief introductions make clear, none of the sections in this volume exhaust Murray's thought on these themes, which he also addressed in several other published essays as well as in still unpublished texts. Hooper seems to have selected these particular essays not only as illustrations of what the preface calls the differentiation and integration of the sacred and the secular but also as evidence for the account of Murray's development he set out in his earlier book, *The Ethics of Discourse: The Social Philosophy of John Courtney Murray* (1986).

If one is content with selections from Murray's works, the idea that guides this collection is not unworthy; one great advantage of this volume is that it forces on the reader's attention several texts that illustrate the commitment to a specifically Christian humanism that Murray continued to urge even while promoting a civic consensus in a pluralistic society. That in all cases the texts chosen best illustrate the themes can reasonably be debated. I would at times have made different choices, most notably with regard to the section on constitutional law, where only a fairly late text is reproduced while more careful and considered essays, particularly in the context of Supreme Court cases in the late 1940s, are merely cited but not reproduced. (I note also that the bibliography does not include Murray's vigorous critique of the *McCollum* decision, first printed in the October 1992 FIRST THINGS.)

An editor has a right to his own opinions and hypotheses, and Hooper displays his in the generally brief introductions and appended editorial notes. But it is clear from the considerable literature on Murray that has appeared in the last ten years that Hooper's is only one interpretation of Murray's development and represents only one of the several evaluations of his project. Apart from brief remarks in the preface to the volume, little account is taken of the contemporary debates. The result is that the volume does not merely collect some useful materials but also advances some particular theses of the editor—with the result, I think, that the collection is too much concerned to read the texts in the light of alleged later developments in Murray's thought and too little interested in the immediate contexts that prompted the essays.

ONE OF THE more interesting debates among students of Murray today concerns his appeal to natural law as the basis for the consensus that he thought necessary for the coherent life of a civic society. This appeal is often criticized on two grounds: first, that his notion of the natural law is too narrowly defined and too optimistically embraced as a solution to the problems of a disintegrative pluralism and an increasingly hegemonic secularism; and second, that his appeal to a purely rational social philosophy is too "thin," i.e., it sacrifices the power of biblical symbols and doctrinal truths to inspire commitment to the redemption of society and history.

In the early 1940s Murray gave sets of lectures that provided specifically theological motives for Catholic involvement in addressing what he called "the spiritual crisis in the temporal order." One set was the three lectures on "The Construction of a Christian College" delivered in February 1940 at Loyola College, Baltimore. (Here they are located at St. Joseph's College; did Murray deliver them twice?) Each lecture probes a central Christian dogma for its cultural implications: the Incarnation grounds a transcendent idea of the dignity of the person, the Trinity discloses true personhood to be relationship within community, the Redemption reveals resurrection

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to be man's true destiny and the Cross to require a passage to interiority and to self-sacrifice for others. The exposition of each mystery and its cultural implications is introduced by criticisms of contemporary American culture that are sharper than any that Murray would later make.

One can immediately see the importance of these texts. They reveal that, at least initially, Murray's interest in social and cultural questions was theologically motivated, and they enable one to place his proposal in the context of other Catholic thinkers who in the 1930s began to think out a new, more discriminating, and more effective Catholic response to the decade's economic, political, and cultural crises. Teilhard pursued his integration of the faith and the evolving world disclosed by modern science; Maritain talked about a "new Christendom"; Dawson called for a renewed Christian culture; Chenu and Congar sought an incarnation of the Church into milieux from which it had been absent, especially that of the working class; de Lubac explored the social aspects of dogma. The 1940 lectures reveal that Murray was aware of many of these thinkers and their work, particularly of de Lubac's *Catholicism*, published only two years earlier.

These lectures survive in typescript in generally good shape, but requiring the work of an editor to note the changes made by Murray himself and to identify Murray's references. In a footnote at the beginning of his edition of these lectures, Hooper says that he has omitted "about one-fourth of the original text to remove redundancies and material not applicable to our present topic" and that he has "supplied some transitional phrasing, where needed."

Unfortunately, he has not generally used ellipses to indicate omissions or brackets to identify his own phrases. No notice is given when some of Murray's briefer paragraphs have been combined in this edition, or of one case in which the sequence of paragraphs has been altered. No notes indicate where Murray himself made corrections in his text or supplied marginal comments. (One of these reveals Murray's acquaintance with Teilhard de Chardin's thought.) No effort is made to identify or to explain works alluded to in the course of the lectures.

A COMPARISON OF this printed version with the typescript of the lectures in the Georgetown archives suggests that Hooper's estimate of how much of the text he has omitted is too low: while thirty-five of the 103 paragraphs are dropped from the first lecture and nineteen of eighty-one from the second, a surprising

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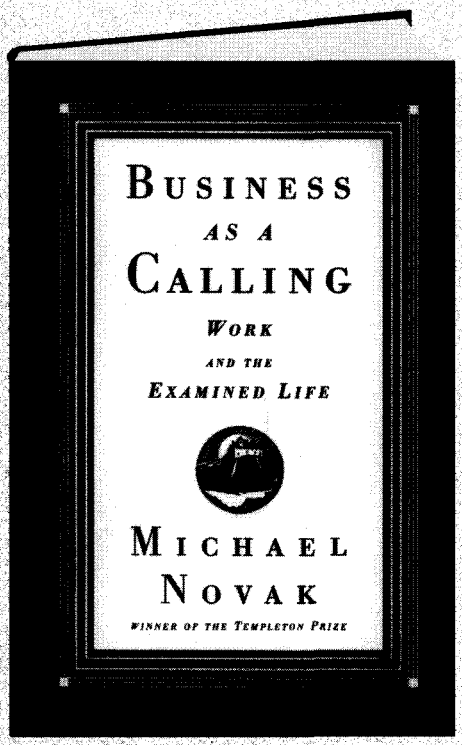

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sixty-one of ninety-five paragraphs are omitted from the third (whose argument, I believe, has been mutilated). A few of the omissions might be defended on the grounds of redundancy, but many of the omitted sections pertain to the general theme of Hooper's volume, representing expansions or illustrations of Murray's main arguments and indicating the range of his reading. Scholars should be aware that they must still consult the typescript of these lectures.

The particular problem here is that the editing has not been guided by the standards that ought to prevail at the indispensable level of basic research: the provision of the data on which subsequent efforts at interpretation, history, and evaluation must reflect. The more general problem, however, is that no individual or group seems interested in undertaking the task of assembling, editing, and then publishing Murray's writings in a critical edition. This is not an easy or inexpensive task, nor one that everyone has the patience or skills to undertake. It requires both a complete inventory of Murray's writings and decisions about the principles with which to organize a complete edition.

My point in urging such a project is the simple fact that much of the basic data for understanding Murray's thought is not easily available, and the already published texts have been plowed so often that they are in danger of becoming barren. Articles and books on Murray differ mostly on the basis of prior methodological, political, or theological judgments. There are those who defend the appeal to some form of natural law argument and those who want instead a political theology. There are neoconservatives and neoliberals. (I once heard a man say, with something approaching horror: "Murray was more Republican than Democrat; I wouldn't be surprised to hear that he voted for Nixon in 1960!") There are those who wish to carry forward Murray's project (in the line of Monsignor John A. Ryan) in working out a critical accommodation between Catholicism and the "American Proposition," and those who are reviving Paul Hanly Furfey's critique of the "conformism" they see to be almost inevitably involved in that effort.

Before we can settle such debates, serious scholarly work needs to be done. We must assemble critical editions of Murray's texts, and complete a threefold inquiry: into whatever development in Murray's thought can be identified, into the development of theological and secular ideas in the United States and in the churches during this century, and into the development of the society and the churches themselves.

Of these three inquiries, the last two obviously depend on the first, which at the present moment, I be-

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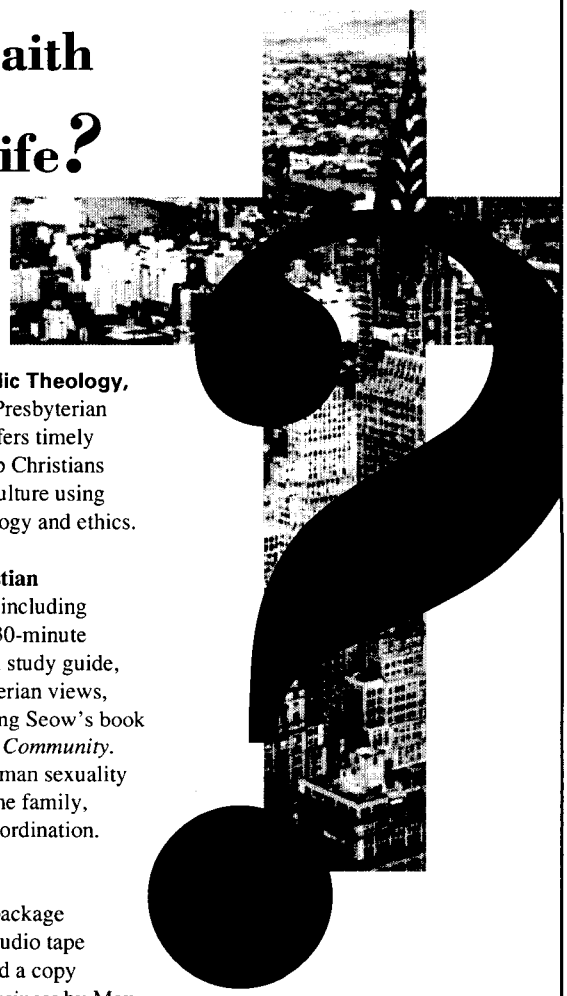

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lieve, is the one not being addressed with sufficient comprehensiveness and critical rigor. Until it is undertaken, I do not expect to see the discussion of the "Murray project" or the struggle over the right to wear his mantle escape from present impasses.

Civilization and Wilderness

INTO THE WILD. By JON KRAKAUER. *Villard. 207 pp. $22.*

***Reviewed by* John P. Sisk**

JON KRAKAUER has written a thoroughly familiar American story. Its central figure, a recent college graduate named Chris McCandless, is spiritually ill at ease in his well-to-do East Coast bourgeois home and strikes out on his own, impelled by a need to make a new life for himself.

In a haphazard way he sees a good deal of the Southwest, canoes down the Grand Canyon to Mexico, wanders about the Pacific coast and into Montana. Along the way he works in an Italian restaurant in Las Vegas, fries hamburgers for McDonald's, and works on a harvest crew. Determined to live authentically on the edge, he makes his way to Alaska where, provisioned with ten pounds of rice and a collection of his favorite paperbacks, he establishes himself north of Mt. McKinley in an abandoned Fairbanks city bus and proceeds to live off the land, supplementing his rice with moose meat, small game, and berries. In four months he is dead of starvation and the poisoning effect of wild potato seeds.

But what really makes this well-written book, which began as an article in *Outside* magazine, is the story of how Krakauer got it. He had the advantage of Chris' letters to friends, as well as his journals and the many photographs that were found with the body in the abandoned bus. Interviews with Chris' parents and sister and the people with whom he came into contact along the way have made possible a skillful reconstruction of the young man's effort to reinvent his life.

Important too is the extent to which the author's own experience in the Alaskan wild anticipated that of his subject. Over a twenty-year period he had gotten to know the country well as carpenter, fisherman, journalist, and occasionally as an imperilled mountain climber. He is in a position to recognize that Chris' naive idealism was greatly responsible for the mistakes that led to his death, but he knows too that a dismissive off-the-rack psychoanalysis of the impulse to live dangerously in the wild can miss something impor-

JOHN P. SISK *is Professor of English Emeritus at Gonzaga University.*

The Astonished Heart

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Robert Farrar Capon

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By taking readers on an illuminating ramble through the history of the church, Capon shows how we have lost this sense of astonishment by making Christianity into a religion that focuses on requirements and restrictions rather than on the Good News, and by turning the church, which should be a body of believers, into an institution that emphasizes its corporate functions to the detriment of its gospel message. After exploring all the ways in which the church has misembodied itself over the centuries, Capon explains how the church today might re-create itself. The key, according to Capon, is recovering the gift of astonishment with which it began.

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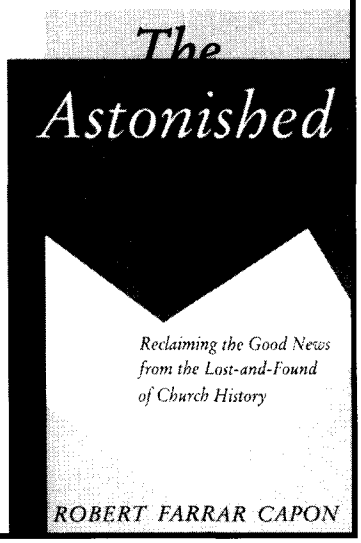

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tant. That insight is not only good for the story itself but can encourage readers to confront issues we are inclined to sentimentalize.

One of the most conspicuous of these issues is the all too familiar identification of civilization as a perverse system of restrictions aimed at denying the individual an environment in which he can achieve the fulfillment that is his birthright. One of Chris' friends recalls how often the young man's face "would darken with anger and he'd fulminate about his parents or politicians or the endemic idiocy of mainstream American life." For many of us this is the way sensitive young idealists ought to sound, and when they go boldly into the wilderness they ought to carry in their backpacks (as Chris did) Thoreau, Jack London, and Tolstoy. Doing so, they give comfort to the laggard rest of us, who are too inclined to live with our frustrations as comfortably as we can and too prudently content to experience wilderness as mere recreation.

Chris writes to a friend: "You must lose your inclination for a monotonous security and adopt a helter-skelter style of life that will first appear to you to be crazy." Like so many of our antinomian culture heroes, including Huckleberry Finn and of course Thoreau, he makes us uneasily aware of our attachment to money and the enslaving comforts it makes possible. Early in his Western tour he burns $123 in a morally mandated act of civil disobedience. According to his mother, even as a teenager he had been a Tolstoyan who "believed that wealth was shameful, corrupting, inherently evil." Indeed, his attitude towards money and its comforts sometimes suggests the ascesis that marked those athletes of God who, as Helen Waddell tells us so memorably in *The Desert Fathers*, were unable to resist the dangerous enchantments of the north African desert. Appropriately enough, then, when Krakauer considers the young man's farewell picture of himself we get this: "Chris McCandless was at peace, serene as a monk gone to God."

There is an aesthetic appeal in this image, as if it memorizes the poem of a life. When he writes to a friend, contrasting the deep peace of the wild with the discontent bred by cities, he claims that "It is enough that I am surrounded with beauty." On a piece of plywood inside the abandoned bus in which he died he identifies himself as "an extremist, an aesthetic voyager." It is an identification that goes with his passion for aloneness and his avoidance of enduring human commitments, whether to family or to the friends who help him get to Alaska. His proper affiliate is an avant-garde artist like the impressionist painter Paul Gauguin, for whom Tahiti was a necessary escape from his family and the contaminating commit-

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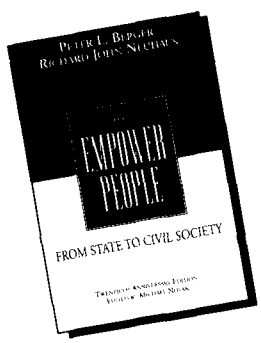

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ments of bourgeois Europe. Alaska was Chris' Tahiti as Walden was Thoreau's. There he found that reality itself resists the attempt to separate the aesthetic elements of life from the ethical and the mundane.

If such "aesthetic idealists" as Gauguin and Thoreau taught us the dangerous—and in Chris' case deadly—separation of the aesthetic life, they also taught us to believe that only in the wild can a man be free from the aesthetic deadening of the civilized world. Young Chris found plenty of encouragement for his aesthetic bias against civilization. But after one hundred days in the wild, with death from starvation looming, he writes in his journal that he is "too weak to walk out, have literally been trapped in the wild." At this point we survivors might say that he has discovered the hard way that the experience of the wild may only be an indulgence that civilization subsidizes as part of its ongoing effort to define and refine itself against the counter efforts of the wild to have it all.

The Gods of the Physicists

THE FIRE IN THE EQUATIONS: SCIENCE, RELIGION, AND THE SEARCH FOR GOD. By KITTY FERGUSON. *Eerdmans. 308 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Stephen M. Barr**

THERE HAS been a recent proliferation of books on science and religion, and this one is among the most absorbing and vivacious. Kitty Ferguson has a gift for explaining abstruse scientific ideas with homely analogies, and her accounts are on the whole quite accurate, in spite of the fact that she is not trained as a scientist.

She is not as sure-footed, however, when it comes to the implications of scientific theories. She declares, for example, that "on the quantum level of the universe the objective truth seems to be that we lose objective reality," which is, to say the least, debatable. She says of chaos theory and complexity theory that they "can be seen to demolish the concept of a completely deterministic, mechanistic universe," which is untrue. The phenomenon of chaos (unlike quantum mechanics) implies nothing whatsoever about determinism. (To be fair to Ferguson, others make these mistakes as well.)

Like a number of recent authors, Ferguson treats science and religion as alternative paths in the "search for God." She appears to wish to end the war between science and religion with a negotiated settlement, and so her public stance is that of a mediator rather than a partisan. "This is not," she writes, "a book designed to pit science against religion and come up with a winner." Of course, in that conflict we should not want a winner (unless we are talking about a false religion), for we are confident that any such conflict will disappear with better understanding. However, the actual contest is, for the most part, between *scientific atheism* and religion.

Ferguson's *irenic intentions* perhaps explain a strange and somewhat irritating feature of her book. More than once she points out a fatal fallacy in some atheist idea only to trot out the same idea in a later chapter as something considerable and weighty. For whatever reason, Ferguson takes the pet philosophical ideas of some physicists far more seriously than they deserve—though she is right that these ideas, though philosophically bogus, have great currency among both physicists and popular writers on "science and religion."

ONE THEME OF Ferguson's book is a search for the First Cause of the universe. She presents three contenders for this role: God, Logical or Mathematical Consistency, and the Universe itself. The latter two are the popular choices of scientific atheists. As Ferguson explains it, the First Cause must be something necessary, or else it would itself require a cause. Something can be said to be necessary if logical or mathematical

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consistency requires it. To many scientists the laws of physics are the ultimate "cause" of everything. And some have suggested that there is a unique set of laws that is mathematically and logically self-consistent. Thus the second candidate on Ferguson's list.

This notion presents a problem even at the level of physics, which is that the complete specification of any physical system (including the universe as a whole) includes not only the general laws of its evolution but also either initial conditions that tell how it started off, or some other boundary conditions. However, in some quarters there is hope that the laws of physics will ultimately be seen to determine the initial conditions of the universe uniquely. The celebrated Hartle-Hawking "no-boundary boundary condition" is a suggestion along these lines.

The more serious problem with this idea of the laws of physics as the necessary First Cause is that it is based on an elementary confusion. At most, the laws of physics could be said to be the "formal cause" of the physical universe, whereas by "the First Cause" is meant the efficient cause of the universe, the cause of its very existence. Hawking himself asked precisely the right question when he wrote, "Even if there is only one possible unified theory, it is just a set of rules and equations. What is it that breathes fire into the equations and makes a universe for them to describe? The usual approach of science of constructing a mathematical model cannot answer the question of why there should be a universe for the model to describe." That is absolutely decisive—crushing. And yet Ferguson, having quoted this and indeed taken the title of her book from it, quite unaccountably says in a later chapter, "We do have a genuine standoff between two First Cause candidates—God and Mathematical and Logical Consistency."

Aside from all this, the idea of uniquely self-consistent physical laws has (to reverse Henry Kissinger's phrase) the added disadvantage of being false. There are an infinite number of perfectly self-consistent sets of "rules and equations" that could be laws of physics for some hypothetical universe. The literature of physics is filled with such "models." There are all sorts of mechanical systems, and "field theories" (both classical and quantum, "free" and "interacting," "exactly soluble" and otherwise, in various number of dimensions), and sophisticated things like "string theories," which are either known to be perfectly mathematically consistent or are in all probability so. What seems to be in the minds of those who speak about "unique laws" is that it is hard to come up with mathematically self-consistent theories *combining certain specific features*; in particular there may only be one consistent theory of quantum gravity. But gravity and quantum mechanics are not logically necessary. They are just empirical facts about the world in which we find ourselves.

WHAT THEN OF the idea of the Universe as First Cause? So as not to put a premature end to the discussion, let us not inquire too closely how a thing can be the cause of itself. Instead, we shall look at some of the popular versions of this idea.

The evidence that our universe has a temporal beginning is now enormously strong. In the "classical" description of the Big Bang (i.e., one that leaves quantum effects out of account) the universe has a first instant of time, which we may call $t = 0$. As one goes back toward this first instant, various physical quantities (such as temperature) grow without limit. At the point $t = 0$ itself, if it existed, these quantities would have been infinite, and one could no longer make sense of the equations.

Such "singular points" are generally regarded with suspicion by physicists, for a number of reasons. But the point $t = 0$ also looks unpleasantly like a "moment of creation." Indeed, it is often called that in popular writing on the subject. Aside, then, from purely technical motivations, there is a belief among some scientists that by banishing this point they will have struck a blow against religion. Some attempts to do this try to revive the idea, which prevailed before the discovery of the Big Bang, of a universe of infinite age. For example, there is the "Bouncing Universe" idea, and the idea of an infinite succession of parent and "baby" universes. But some recent proposals assume that

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the universe indeed has a finite age and seek only to get rid of that nettlesome point at $t = 0$. The attitude seems to be that if there has to be a Beginning at least we do not want it to happen at an identifiable instant.

Many scientists suspect, for good reasons, that this "singularity" at $t = 0$ will get washed out when proper account is taken of quantum effects (which is not yet feasible). Hartle and Hawking have a speculation about this, which has been advanced not only in technical papers but in the enormously popular book *A Brief History of Time*.

Some idea of what is involved can be had by the analogy of a mathematical cone. Such a cone has a singular point at the sharp end, where its curvature is infinite. We can call that point "$t = 0$" and imagine "time" as running down the cone from the smaller to the larger end. Hartle and Hawking's idea has the effect of smoothing out that sharp point. One might imagine that, smooth or not, there still has to be an "earliest" point on the cone. But it turns out that in the Hartle-Hawking scheme time radically changes its character near "the beginning" and becomes like space. Instead of three spatial and one temporal dimensions, there are four space dimensions. It becomes impossible, then, to talk about which point is really "first." (It should be noted that all these remarkable things would happen in the first ten-millionth of a billionth of a billionth of a billionth of a billionth of a second of the universe's history.)

As a physics idea this is elegant and highly interesting. But does it have philosophical or theological implications? I think not. The idea does achieve the goal of getting rid of the "first moment in time," which is why it is called the "no boundary" proposal. It may be of some comfort to those who are awed and consternated by the mathematics of "imaginary time" and quantum cosmology that the same effect of removing the "first moment" may be accomplished much more straightforwardly even in the simple and intuitively graspable classical picture—namely, just by saying that the point $t = 0$ is not there.

The net effect of this infinitesimal alteration is that there is no longer a first instant of time. (Just as, if we exclude the precise instant of Noon itself, there is no "first moment of the afternoon." Each and every moment of the afternoon lies a finite time after Noon, and so has some of the afternoon preceding it.) But who could possibly care about such a quibble? How can anything of consequence depend on whether that one geometrical point, $t = 0$, is or is not there? It would appear that some cosmologists like their angels to dance on the point of the pin.

The Hartle-Hawking scheme has a potentially more significant effect, in apparently eliminating the need for specifying the "initial conditions" of the universe (which some suppose to be God's only job). In fact, however, the requirement that there be no boundary is itself just a special *kind* of boundary condition among many others that are logically possible. As the Harvard physicist Sidney Coleman pungently remarked in the introduction of one of his technical papers, "Although the 'no-boundary' boundary condition may be pretty, it is not divinely ordained, and thus [we shall also] investigate alternative boundary conditions."

THE SUFFICIENT ANSWER to the no-boundary boundary condition as an argument against God has been well expressed by the physicist Don Page, a friend and collaborator of Stephen Hawking and, as it happens, a born-again Christian: "God creates and sustains the entire universe rather than just the beginning. Whether or not the Universe has a beginning has no relevance to the question of its creation, just as whether an artist's line has a beginning and an end, or instead forms a circle with no end, has no relevance to the question of its being drawn." Though Ferguson quotes this, she ends that chapter still declaring a standoff.

Another class of ideas involve explaining the Big Bang as a quantum event. In quantum mechanics one can have particles being "created out of the vacuum." That is, there can be transitions from a state with no particles to a state with one or more particles. By analogy it has been suggested that spontaneous transitions can occur from a state with "no universes" to a state with one (or more) universes.

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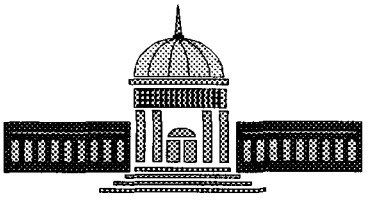

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Whether this makes sense as physics is not yet clear. But if it does, will it give us creation *ex nihilo* without God? Only if one equivocates about what "nothing" and "universe" mean. A quantum state without any particles or even without any "universes" is not nothing—it is a quantum state.

Perhaps the distinction can be illustrated with an analogy. There is a difference (if not a spendable one) between a bank account with no dollars in it and no bank account at all. To have a bank account, even one with a momentarily zero (or negative) balance, requires having a bank, an agreement with that bank, a monetary system, a currency, and banking laws. Similarly, to talk about states with various numbers of "universes" requires having a quantum system with different possible "states," and laws determining the character of those states and governing the transitions among them. The term "the universe" should really be applied to this whole system with its laws, and not, as is misleadingly done in such discussions, to "space-times" that are coming into and going out of existence.

Hawking had it right: having equations that describe a "universe" (or anything else) coming into being does not mean that these equations must be describing anything real. Having a story about fairies does not mean there are fairies.

Pascal found the "god of the philosophers" a poor thing; we can only imagine what he would have said about the gods of the physicists. What we should say is that these speculations are pretty, and some may even turn out to be true, but they leave the argument about a First Cause just where it was. There either is a First Cause and it is God, or there is no need of a First Cause. Physics can shed no light on that issue.

Does modern physics, then, have anything at all of importance to say to philosophy? It does, but paradoxically its main contribution is in supporting old ideas—religious ideas, indeed—that had been challenged on the basis of earlier science. In that earlier science matter and energy, which could "neither be created nor destroyed," evolved according to an iron determinism against the static backdrop of an infinite space and time. There was no hint of a Beginning and no possibility of genuine freedom. But the Big Bang has brought us back to a Beginning, and quantum theory has pushed determinism out of the saddle. The discoveries of Copernicus, Darwin, and modern astronomy had, it seemed to many, relegated man to marginality and insignificance. But the growing awareness of the so-called "anthropic coincidences"—numerous fortunate features of the laws of physics that made possible the emergence of life—has led even some scientists of agnostic tendency to embrace the idea that there might be a purpose after all, and man a part of it.

The Latin apologist Minucius Felix, writing around 200 A.D., said, "If upon entering some home you saw that everything there was well-tended, neat, and decorative, you would believe that some master was in charge of it, and that he himself was superior to those good things. So too in the home of this world, when you see providence, order, and law in the heavens and on earth, believe there is a Lord and Author of the universe, more beautiful than the stars themselves and the various parts of the whole world." The greatest contribution of science to the "search of God" has been to bring into fuller view the grandeur of this providence, order, and law.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Church Teaching Authority: Historical and Theological Studies. By John P. Boyle. *University of Notre Dame Press. 241 pp. $38.95.*

In eight scholarly essays, framed by an introduction and a conclusion, Father Boyle examines aspects of the Church's teaching office. The first chapter deals with the Munich Congress of Catholic scholars that met under the direction of Ignaz von Döllinger in 1863 and with the papal letter *Tuas Libenter* that followed in 1864. This chapter, published in earlier form in 1979-1980, represents original research and sheds valuable light on the origins and meaning of the term "ordinary and universal

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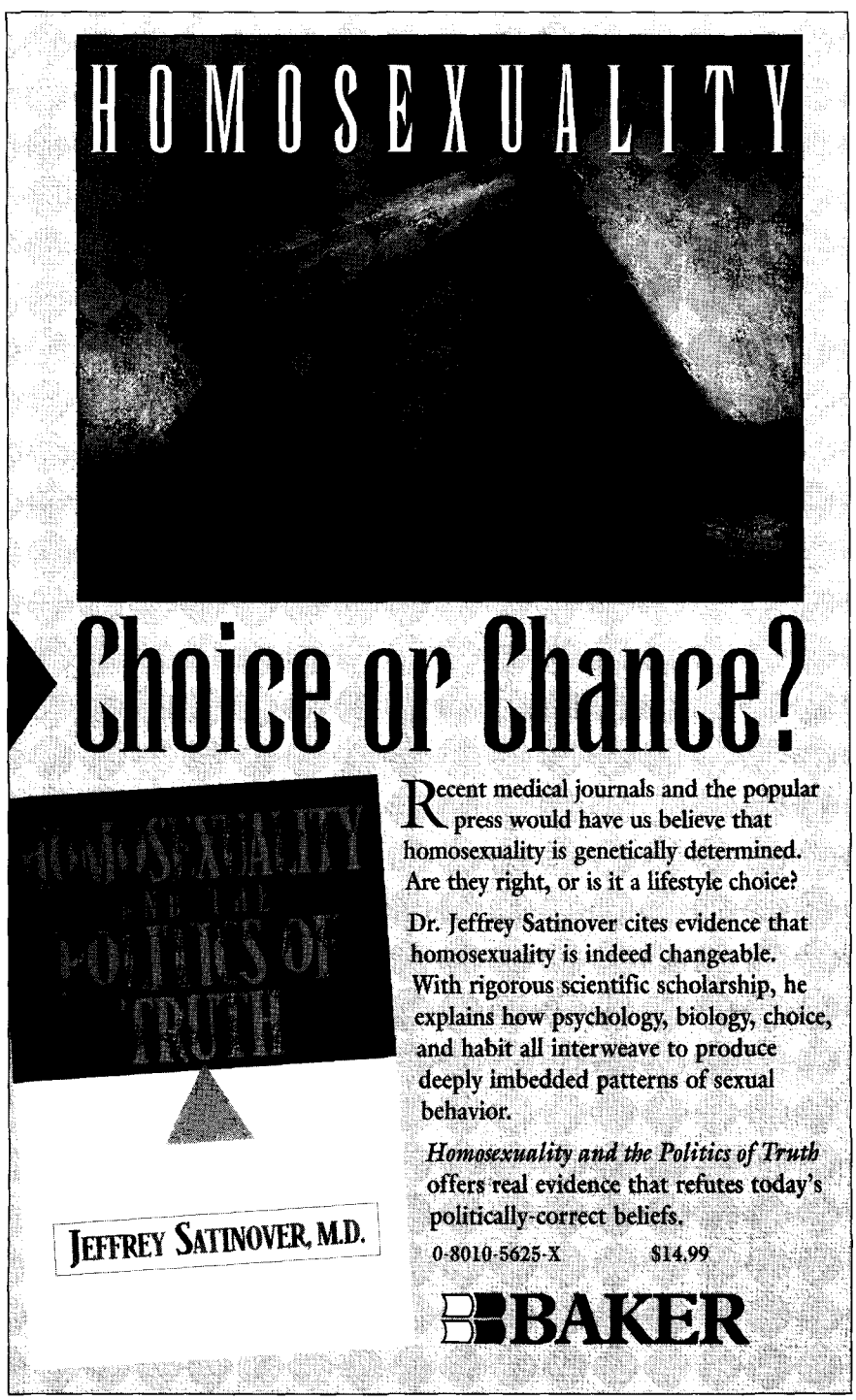
magisterium." Other chapters deal with the theology of Joseph Kleutgen, the role of magisterium in the present Code of Canon Law, the competence of the magisterium in matters of natural law, the assent due to noninfallible teaching, and the concept of "reception." In these areas Boyle generally follows the lead of mentors such as Karl Rahner, Yves Congar, Josef Fuchs, Hermann Josef Pottmeyer, and Francis A. Sullivan. With concerns characteristic of this school, Boyle is critical of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian." The writings of John Paul II receive little attention, even though encyclicals such as *Veritatis Splendor* have much to say about themes here treated. Holding that Vatican II effected a shift from the institutional to the communion model of the church, Boyle minimizes the authority that the council ascribes to the magisterium and the council's responsibility for doctrines that Boyle opposes, such as the *obsequium* due to noninfallible church doctrine. Boyle pleads for a restoration of the medieval *studium* to complement the authoritative teaching office. But if theologians claim to be an independent voice in the church, entitled to encourage dissent, the hierarchy must take countermeasures to ensure the faithful transmission of authentic teaching to the faithful. Although this book contains some incisive criticisms of the contemporary magisterium, it contains no corresponding criticism of the theological community. Boyle writes in part as an advocate, seeking to enlarge the rights of theologians as against the hierarchical magisterium.

— *Avery Dulles, S.J.*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RELIGION AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN 19TH CENTURY AMERICA: THE CONTRIBUTION OF ORESTES A. BROWNSON. By EDWARD J. POWER. *Paulist Press. $13.95. 182 pp.*

This book is mislabeled; it is actually an account of Orestes Brownson, and only indirectly a discussion of religion and public schools. The author's access to the extensive Brownson archives at Notre Dame constitutes the book's chief value for those interested in Brownson's role in the Americanization of Roman Catholicism back in the days when it was strongly identified with lower-class immigrants. A sort of American version of John Henry Newman, Brownson was America's most noted ("distinguished" would put it too strongly) convert to Catholicism in the mid-nineteenth century, a self-publishing journalist who enjoyed a certain success in the defense of his new and very unfashionable faith, only to fade away after the Civil War as the Catholic Church grew increasingly at home in the United

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States. A man of enthusiasms, Brownson could not resist fighting with his allies once he had scored against their common enemies. Though he was among the opponents of Horace Mann (insisting that "an education which is not religious is solemn mockery"), he later became a critic of Catholic schools, lamenting their poor quality with little regard for the difficulties they faced or the sacrifices made by those he so freely criticized. Eventually his cantankerousness made him a burden for the church that had welcomed him as a convert. Power's presentation of Brownson's views is unsystematic (perhaps inevitable in writing about a journalist), but it would be helpful to know more about the sources and the impact of his ideas. The effort to place these in a broader context of American history is largely unsuccessful and in some respects misleading. The life and times of Orestes Brownson deserve a full-scale and thoughtful presentation, for which this study provides some of the raw materials.

— *Charles L. Glenn*

SAVIOR OR SERVANT? PUTTING GOVERNMENT IN ITS PLACE. By DAVID W. HALL. *Kuyper Institute. 399 pps. $8.95 paper.*

Despite more than two decades of activism, evangelicals have devoted little theological reflection to politics, according to David Hall, Pastor of Covenant Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, and Editor of the on-line theological journal, *Premise. Savior or Servant?* attempts to fill that gap. "Sprawling" is too weak for a book that ranges from Genesis to Revelation, and summarizes political theology from Irenaeus to Jürgen Moltmann. Focusing on political theory, Hall ignores the contribution of practice (e.g., the medieval papacy and canon law) to theory. Intent to trace a unified tradition of Christian political reflection, he arrives at a homogenization that is due in part to his quixotic aim to articulate principles for "all times" and that left me with the uneasy sense that he found in his sources only what he was looking for. Nonetheless, Hall sketches a solid if abstract consensus: political authority is good because instituted by God, but its reach must be limited. Though wary of concentrated power, Hall contests antistate conservative rhetoric and cites the biblical example of Joseph to highlight the positive potential of centralization. Hall's choice of historical figures is refreshingly broad, including Aquinas, Machiavelli (whom he surprisingly wants to rehabilitate), Barth, Helmut Thielicke, and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as such Reformed thinkers as Johannes Althusius, Samuel Rutherford, and William Groen van Prinsterer. If this book does no more than alert evangelicals to the riches of Christian political thought and impels them to more theological politics, it will have served a worthy purpose.

— *Peter J. Leithart*

THE SCHOOL OF THE CHURCH: WORSHIP AND CHRISTIAN FORMATION. By PHILIP H. PFATTEICHER. *Trinity Press International. 141 pp. $14 paper.*

Dr. Pfatteicher has written a relatively short work that touches a very critical current issue in worship: language. But this book is not about words nor does it play with language and meaning. It treats the eucharistic liturgy (primarily as celebrated in American Episcopal and Lutheran Churches) as an icon: at once recognizable but not completely familiar. Liturgical language strives both to be intelligible and, through the joining of music to words, also to express the ineffable. Of particular pertinence is the final chapter, "Beyond the Boundaries," where the author helps the reader to appreciate the need for liturgical (do not read "opaque") language that is neither bland nor in thrall to the politically

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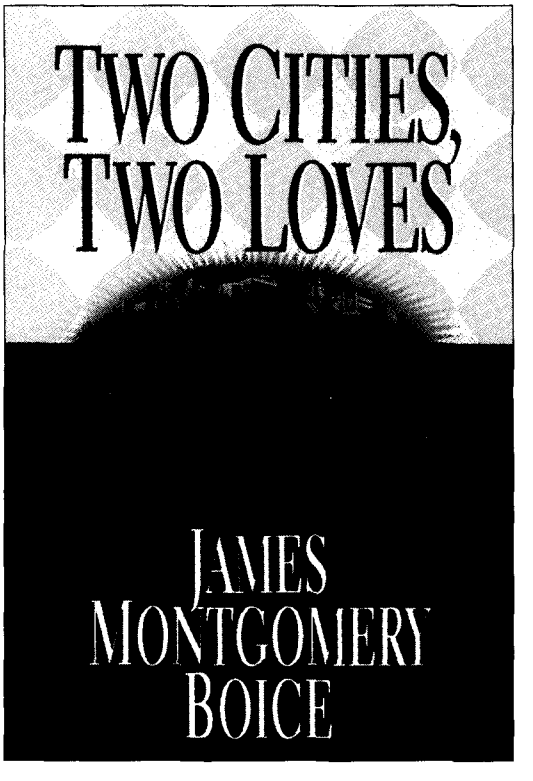

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correct canon, but thoroughly faithful to the written and oral tradition of the Church.

— *Larry Bailey*

THE HAND OF GOD. By BERNARD NATHANSON. *Regnery. 206 pp. $24.95.*

This is a painful, honest, and at last deeply spiritual confession, by the abortionist who changed his mind. Predestined by his severe and reproachful father to become a physician, Dr. Nathanson was reared in a moral and spiritual vacuum whose only ethics was a medical professionalism. Moved by his desire to help his women patients, the first serious moral impulse of his life, he quickly became a leader in the campaign to legalize abortion—helping to found the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws and directing the largest abortion clinic in the U.S. Unlike many of his contemporaries, however, he did not stop his moral reflections with his first impulse, and he came gradually to see both the damage abortion did to his pregnant patients and the death it wrought among their babies. Abandoning his abortion practice, he has devoted himself to fighting the abortion machine he helped create, producing the seminal pro-life film, *The Silent Scream*, and lecturing widely. The forgiveness offered in Christian theology and the witness of Christian opponents of abortion proved important influences in Dr. Nathanson's spiritual growth, and *The Hand of God* concludes with a moving account of his preparation to join the Catholic Church.

WORD AND SILENCE: HANS URS VON BALTHASAR AND THE SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST. By RAYMOND GAWRONSKI, S.J. *Eerdmans. 233 pp. $35.*

More and more people active in interreligious dialogue are coming to realize that the old style of conducting ecumenical discussions has not been yielding the results once hoped for. The typical ecumenical talk-fest in the years just after Vatican II would be run like a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous: everyone would get up and confess the tradition they "came from" and opine how lovely it was to belong to the new shared faith of Ecumenism Itself. When that had the predictable effect of turning conversation into a binge of self-congratulation, the realization at last dawned that those discussions work best that allow each partner to be unabashedly confessional. Hans Urs von Balthasar is nothing if not a theologian who stresses the particular, and his theology was not until recently highly valued for its ecumenical contribution. But now comes Raymond Gawronski to show that the very particularity of this singular theologian bears rich potential for ecumenical dialogue. The only flaw in this book (and given its intention it is a seriously debilitating one) is that it concentrates so heavily on Balthasar that Asia, the dialogue's other partner, is rarely mentioned.

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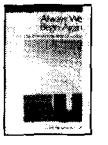

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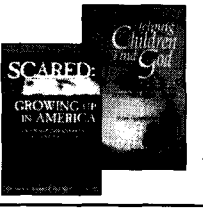

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Buddhism—and not the "East" in general—is really the only issue that matters for Father Gawronski, but there is so little discussion even of Buddhism that one wonders if this book will prove of benefit to anyone not already a doctoral student working on Balthasar's ecumenism. At one point the author slips and calls the book "this dissertation," which nicely sums up the flaws of what could, and should, have been a much more substantial contribution.

RACHEL. By SAMUEL H. DRESNER. *Fortress. 256 pp. $17 paper.*

The first book-length treatment of Rachel, who, probably more than any other biblical matriarch, has captivated the imagination of religious Jews and Christians. Professor Dresner, of Jewish Theological Seminary, has produced a work that is both learned and lucid, allowing Rachel's personality, passion, and mystique to emerge with great vividness. The scholarly sources (mainly talmudic and midrashic, but also some Christian), far from making the account dry or academic, actually heighten the near-melodramatic intensity and complexity of Rachel's life. Her influence on the course of biblical narrative and on the piety of future generations is handled skillfully and comprehensively—a powerful refutation of the frequent feminist complaint that the Bible is merely "a guy's story."

THE PLAY OF PARODOX. By Bryan Crockett. *University of Pennsylvania Press. 213 pp. $32.95.*

In this wide-ranging account of the Renaissance "Cult of the Ear," Professor Crockett argues for the cultural unity of Renaissance England and the fact that everyone—Protestant and Catholic, playwright and preacher—shared in the midst of all their disagreements a belief in rhetorical force. If the book does nothing more than remind English teachers once again that they need to read English preaching to understand English literature, that they need to read Donne's sermons to understand Donne's poetry, it will have performed a valuable service. But *The Play of Paradox* deserves a place in contemporary homiletics as well. Shakespeare's contemporaries in the golden age of English preaching knew what many preachers since seem to have forgotten, that the art of sermonizing is akin to theater—not in its spectacle and showmanship, but in its knowledge of the "holy cozenage" of rhetoric and the power of the spoken word.

RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE: A DILEMMA FOR DEMOCRACY. By RONALD A. THIEMANN. *Georgetown University Press. 186 pp. $55 cloth, $17.95 paper.*

A very civilized survey of aspects of the historical background and theoretical arguments that have gone into shaping America's liberal regime. Thiemann, who is dean of Harvard Divinity School, engages the work of Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer, and others who have raised important questions about the limits of liberalism as currently conceptualized and practiced. There is about this exercise, however, a certain smell of the secular academy and defensiveness about the place, or non-place, of religion in that world. This is reflected in the subtitle. Religion in public life is "a dilemma for democracy," and Thiemann seems at times to be begging his secular interlocutors, hat in hand, to be open to the idea that religion need not be dangerously fanatical. This does not make it a bad book. On the contrary, it is well-intended and thoughtful. It is simply that it seems so very removed from the arguments and conflicts over religion and public life that are currently reconfiguring the American liberal regime.

THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME. By Carol Zaleski. *Oxford University Press. 98 pp. $18.95.*

We cannot imagine being dead, Sigmund Freud once claimed, because the very attempt to imagine being dead requires that we imagine ourselves still alive to do the imagining—and such naive notions as the Christian belief in an afterlife are merely irrational projections of this paradox. What little attention recent intellectuals and journalists have given the topic has mostly followed Freud's line, equating the history of Christian reflection about the afterlife with belief in UFOs and the undying Elvis. In these thoughtful and charming lectures, however, Carol Zaleski demonstrates not only the obvious point that there is more in heaven and earth than is dreamt of by recent intellectuals and journalists, but also that the afterlife is a proper—indeed, a mandatory—topic for Christian spiritual reflection. Especially good on the uses and misuses of "near-death experiences," *The Life of the World to Come* is a mature and spiritually rewarding volume, highly recommended.

WHAT GOD ALLOWS: THE CRISIS OF FAITH AND CONSCIENCE IN ONE CATHOLIC CHURCH. By IVOR SHAPIRO. *Doubleday. 307 pp. $23.95.*

There are no surprises in the story line itself: Restless, confused Catholics chafe under the authority of a reactionary pope and will decide by their own conscience (read willfulness) what it really means to be Catholic. That said, however, the account of one year in the life of St. Paul's Church in Kenmore, New York, is both graceful and perceptive, and betrays more of the author's orthodoxy than he is apparently comfortable in admitting. He and Jimmy Breslin are wrong in thinking that "there's no such thing as a lapsed Catholic." But this book does demonstrate that even a lapsed Catholic is a lapsed *Catholic.*

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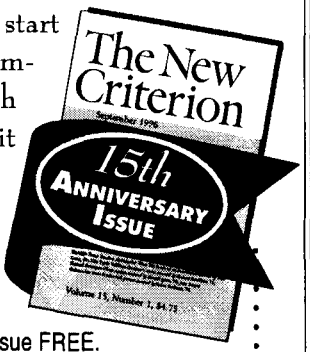

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Farewell to the Overclass

Egalitarian protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, every functional society has a class composed of those who wield concentrated political and economic power and who set its manners, or lack thereof. Within that class, different people do different things, and the most important thing that is done is the minting and marketing of the ideas by which people try to make sense of their lives.

Ruling class is the old-fashioned term, and happy the society in which the members of the ruling class wrap their preeminence in the language of equality and the goal of universal self-governance. In his last book, the late Christopher Lasch depicted the unhappy circumstance of our last several decades as a "betrayal of the elites." The elites, he said, have come to define democracy not in terms of self-governance but of upward mobility. In this view, the promise of democracy is the prospect of rising above the people to join the elites concentrated in government, the university, and the media.

We now have a quite new phenomenon in the history of the republic: two radically isolated sectors of the population, the underclass and the overclass. Both are in an adversarial posture toward the great majority of Americans, the overclass by virtue of ambition and unbounded self-esteem, the underclass by virtue of social incompetence and anomie. Between the two there is a fearful symmetry on many scores, but their service to each other is far from equal.

Although it goes back before the 1960s, the pattern then became more overt by which the overclass exploited the disadvantaged of the underclass to greatly expand their own rule. To be fair, they did not think they were exploiting the poor. And, in fact, the civil rights movement from the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956 through the rise of the black power movement in the early sixties was a rare instance in which elite advocacy on behalf of the disenfranchised and against entrenched custom enhanced the measure of justice in American life. That civil rights movement was, with considerable right, portrayed as a moment of moral luminosity, and the overclass has been basking in its afterglow for almost forty years. The principle seemed established for a time that the elites possessed their power, and were justly ambitious for more power, by virtue of their moral status as champions of the oppressed. The luminosity of that moment, however, was not sufficient to cast the light of moral legitimacy on all the causes that subsequently would be included in the great cause of all causes called Social Justice.

Upon consideration, most Americans declined the proposal that we should make permanent peace with communism (a.k.a. coexistence), were decidedly cool to the idea that marriage and motherhood are forms of slavery, deemed the drug culture a pathetic addiction, did not agree that religion in the classroom violated sacred rights, and persisted in viewing homosexuality as a perversion both pitiable and repugnant. They were unattracted by a cultural liberation that brought us crack houses, glory holes, and needle parks; and found themselves unable to follow the logic of replacing, by means of quotas, racial and sexual discrimination with racial and sexual discrimination. Most important, and despite the sustained barrage of decades of propaganda, Americans stubbornly refused to believe that the unlimited license to kill unborn children constituted a great leap forward in our understanding of human dignity. As if that were not enough, it had become evident by the 1970s that the social programs issuing from the civil rights movement had turned in very nasty ways upon the very people they were intended to help, resulting in an urban and chiefly black underclass of pathologies unbounded.

Clearly the moral mandate claimed from that now distant moment of luminosity had run out. The political notice that its date of expiration had passed was decisively given in the election of Ronald

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Reagan in 1980, although the notice was evident enough in the rejection of George McGovern eight years earlier. Mr. Clinton captured the White House, albeit with a minority of voters, because, like all successful presidential candidates after 1964, he ran as a conservative, and because George Bush apparently stopped running when apprised of the probability that he was not to be reelected by acclamation. But let us not be distracted by politics.

Isolated Enclaves

The fact is that we now find ourselves with two alienated classes. It is alienation that distinguishes today's overclass from the ruling classes of the past. A ruling class that discreetly disguised its role in deference to democratic sensibilities was by most Americans thought to be bearable and even admirable, especially as its privileges were thought to be derived from breeding and achievement. The overclass is something else. As the word suggests, it is marked by an overbearing quality; it presents itself as being over and against the American people but is quite unable to give any good reasons for its pretensions to superiority.

The encouraging thing is that an overclass cannot sustain itself as a ruling class because it offers no argument for its right to rule. Assumed superiority is not an argument. The overclass that emerged from the 1960s deconstructed the moral foundations of its current privilege by its relentless attack on all traditional justifications of privilege. Proponents of permanent revolution are hard put to call for a pause in the revolution in order to allow them to savor their triumph. They cannot recall from the political culture the passions and prejudices which they employed in overthrowing the establishment, and by which they are now being overthrown. Today's moment of populist insurrection is commonly called traditionalist, but it is in large part a continuation of the revolution of the sixties, now directed against the revolutionaries of the overclass who seized the commanding heights of culture.

Their perch on the heights is most precarious. In ways beyond numbering, Americans are railing at the governmental, media, and university elites, declaring that they have had enough and are not going to take it anymore. Rather than perching on the heights, it may be more accurate to say that these elites have retreated to protective enclaves in search of refuge against an angry and ungrateful populace. There they find solace among their own kind. In undisturbed caucus they propound the true socialism that has been betrayed by every socialism tried; their network anchorpersons sound nightly alarums against the ascendant fascism of Christian conservatives; and they churn out unreadable academic deconstructions of elitism, turning a blind eye to the elite that they are. Or the elite that for one shining moment—a Camelot, so to speak—they thought themselves to be. But now the enclaves are shadowed by the suspicion that they are only talking to themselves. Outside, the barbarians are taking over.

Why America Hates Harvard

The antielitist elite of the overclass finds itself in a galling quandary. It was no big news that Harvard hated America; the best and the brightest have always been prone to indulging a measure of contempt for the generality of mankind. The new twist is that America hates Harvard because Harvard despises what Harvard is supposed to represent—scholarship, honesty, and manners worthy of emulation. America is in rebellion against an overclass that has systematically trashed the values by which a ruling class can justly claim the right to rule. (Which, of course, does not stop many young Americans from wanting to join the overclass, also by way of Harvard.)

In addition to the inherent incoherence of anti-elitist elitism, the overclass attempted something quite new that has not worked and almost certainly cannot work. Looking back on the ruins of the glory that was Rome (his Camelot, so to speak), Gibbon, with a grandiloquence equal to his prodigious bigotry, blamed "the barbarians and religion." The same combination of barbarians and religion is blamed by today's overclass for its decline and impending fall. Both history and common sense suggest that there is no sustainable rule without religion. Not necessarily this religion or that, but religion in the sense of *religare*, of ideas and traditions that bind people together, that evoke the communal adherence we call loyalty. Being itself loyal to nothing, the overclass cannot evoke loyalty.

One cannot hold the commanding heights without commanding truths, and it was by the rejection of commanding truths that the overclass seized the heights in the first place. In the absence of truths, or even of the possibility of truth, the overclass, led by such as Richard Rorty, wanly sings the praises of "ironic liberalism," and tries not to notice that the choir gets smaller and smaller. They mint and try to market ideas that no sensible person would want to live by; their cultural coinage is rejected as being backed by nothing—literally nothing, as the debonair nihilists who issue it readily confess, indeed, as they incessantly boast.

So this is the new thing about the overclass: it does not so much want to rule as to be admired for having exposed the fraudulence of rule. At the same time, of course, it does want to rule. At least, if somebody must rule—and in the nature of things, somebody must—the members of the overclass, while denying in principle anything that might be called the nature of things, has a decided preference for ruling rather than being ruled. Especially if the alternative is the rule of barbarians and religion, meaning the American people.

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Rulers of the past produced various warrants for their rule. There was, for instance, the divine right of kings. Gibbon and his philosophe friends contended that the religion of the Enlightenment provided a rationalist access to truth that superseded the dark ages before their arrival. More recently, Marxist masters were legitimated by putatively scientific appeal to the dialectic of history. Here in America, a ruling class that bore some similarities to the current overclass located its right to rule in its calling to reeducate the commoners. John Dewey and his acolytes recognized that Americans could not be weaned from religion except by a more attractive religion, and so Dewey proposed his Common Faith of Democracy, frankly presented as the religion of humanism, only to discover that Americans were incorrigibly attached to the antique truths of Sinai and Calvary. In bitter disillusionment, the heirs of Dewey resolved that, if they could not impose their religion, they would expunge religion altogether from our public life, and especially from the schools.

Whether called the knowledge class, the new class, or the overclass, today it is tottering, and it knows it. The campaign of liberation from the traditional meanings that give life meaning met with such popular hostility that some of the overclass had second thoughts. From out of one defensive enclave rode a paladin of high spiritual purpose proposing nothing less than a "politics of meaning." A puzzled populace, not knowing what was meant by meaning but recognizing the politics, politely declined the proposal. The politics may be disguised for the nonce, and there may be another election or two to be won, but the rule of the overclass is drawing to a close.

A generation that was born, nursed, and reared by the overclass, that never knew anything but the overclass, must finally fall back upon sounding a final trumpet for the nostrum that first roused it to political consciousness: The American people want change! The American people warmly agree. And so it was, future historians will note, that the overclass rode off into the sunset astride the weary old charger named Change, the very horse on which it had arrived.

FT

UNDOING VOLUNTARISM

This year's John Courtney Murray Lecture was delivered by John A. Coleman, S.J., of Berkeley. I have a fondness for that lectureship, since it provided the occasion for my first setting forth the thesis of "the naked public square." Father Coleman impressively builds on that argument with his examination of religiously based activism in the public square. He looks at groups as diverse as Habitat for Humanity, Bread for the World, and Focus on the Family, noting that even secular analysts acknowledge that the preponderance of citizen action in this country is rooted in communities of religious faith.

Coleman's reflection is somewhat weakened by a failure to note all the ways in which voluntary groups can undermine their own genius. He does mention the problem of business executives in Habitat for Humanity who urge that home building might be done more efficiently by depending less on volunteers. Neglected, however, is the way in which other activist groups become instruments of governmental expansion. Many years ago, Arthur Simon and I—both Lutheran pastors at the time—planned the launching of Bread for the World. During the years that Art was president and I was on the executive committee, I believe Bread did great good in alerting Christians to the problems of world hunger. Eventually, however, the organization became less an instrument of citizen action in response to human need than yet another liberal pressure group lobbying for increased government spending. While continuing to respect Art Simon and many others involved, I was reluctantly forced to the conclusion that, on both domestic and international policies, Bread had become a part of the problem. Fr. Coleman rightly notes the ways in which voluntarism can be undone by corporate entanglements, but his analysis would be strengthened by attention to the equal or even greater threat of entanglement with government.

The burden of Coleman's lecture, however, is to underscore the continuing problems of the naked public square. He sharply criticizes theorists such as Harvard's John Rawls who contend that religious discourse can have no legitimate place in public debate. Philosopher Robert Audi of the University of Nebraska has urged that religiously motivated citizens should practice "epistemic abstinence." Respect for nonbelievers, he contends, requires that believers who address public policy questions should refrain from appealing to identifiably religious arguments. Coleman strongly objects to this "gag rule" on religion in public. He cites Sanford Levinson, law professor at the University of Texas: "Why doesn't liberal philosophy give everyone an equal right, without engaging in any version of epistemic abstinence, to make his or her arguments, subject to the prerogative of listeners to reject the arguments, should they be unpersuasive—which will be the case, almost by definition, with arguments that are not widely accessible or are otherwise marginal."

A critic who attended this year's John Courtney Murray lecture complained that it offered no theoretical advance on arguments that are now familiar, but that strikes me as unfair. As Dr. Johnson observed, we have a greater need to be reminded than to be instructed. John A. Coleman renders an important service by reminding us of the

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perduring power of the bigotries that would exclude religion from public discourse, and by lifting up once again the importance of voluntarism and mediating institutions to the vitality of American democracy. It is not a valid complaint to say that it was said before, even in the forum of the John Courtney Murray lecture. One might as well complain that Tocqueville said most of it 160 years ago. The point is that it needs to be said again and again, and we should be grateful to Fr. Coleman for taking on that necessary, and necessarily modest, task.

FT

What To Do in a Dangerous World

Fifty years after Winston Churchill gave his famous "iron curtain" speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, Lady Thatcher addressed the state of the world on the same spot. (She noted that the earlier speech was not well received at the time. "To judge by the critics you would have imagined that it was not Stalin but Churchill who had drawn down the iron curtain.") Curiously, the Thatcher speech received almost no attention in the national press, so here are some important pieces of it.

She compares 1946 and 1996: "Today we are at what could be a similar watershed. The long twilight struggle of the Cold War ended five years ago with complete victory for the West and for the subject peoples of the Communist empire—and I very much include the Russian people in that description. It ended amid high hopes of a New World Order. But those hopes have been grievously disappointed. Somalia, Bosnia, and the rise of Islamic militancy all point to instability and conflict rather than cooperation and harmony."

The aftermath of communism's collapse is, to put it gently, problematic: "Like a giant refrigerator that had finally broken down after years of poor maintenance, the Soviet empire in its collapse released all the ills of ethnic, social, and political backwardness which it had frozen in suspended animation for so long. . . . The moral vacuum created by communism in everyday life was filled for some by a revived Orthodox Church, but for others by the rise in crime, corruption, gambling, and drug addiction—all contributing to a spreading ethic of luck, a belief that economic life is a zero-sum game, and an irrational nostalgia for a totalitarian order without totalitarian methods."

Much of Lady Thatcher's concern was aimed at nuclear proliferation: "The Soviet collapse has also aggravated the single most awesome threat of modern times: the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. These weapons—and the ability to develop and deliver them—are today acquired by middle-income countries with modest populations such as Iraq, Iran, Libya, and Syria—acquired sometimes from other powers like China and North Korea, but most ominously from former Soviet arsenals, or unemployed scientists, or from organized criminal rings, all via a growing international black market." She held up the prospect that, by the end of this decade, we may see twenty countries with ballistic missiles, nine with nuclear weapons, ten with biological weapons, and up to thirty with chemical weapons of mass destruction.

Her view of the Islamic insurgency is grim: "Within the Islamic world the Soviet collapse undermined the legitimacy of radical secular regimes and gave an impetus to the rise of radical Islam. Radical Islamist movements now constitute a major revolutionary threat not only to the Saddams and Assads but also to conservative Arab regimes, who are allies of the West. Indeed they challenge the very idea of a Western economic presence. Hence, the random acts of violence designed to drive American companies and tourists out of the Islamic world."

With the end of the automatic Soviet veto, some thought the UN ("multilateralism") would be the way to order the world. "Of course, there was always a fair amount of hypocrisy embedded in multilateralist doctrine. The Haiti intervention by U.S. forces acting under a United Nations mandate, for instance, was defended as an exercise in restoring a Haitian democracy that had never existed; but it might be better described in the language of Clausewitz as the continuation of American immigration control by other means. But honest multilateralism without the spur of national interest has led to intervention without clear aims."

Star Wars Redux

One reasonable response to the new world disorder, she suggests, is an effective ballistic missile defense (Reagan's much scorned "star wars"), which is receiving more respectful attention these days. The contribution of such a defense is at least five-fold: "First and most obviously it promises the possibility of protection if deterrence fails; or if there is a limited and unauthorized use of nuclear missiles. Second, it would also preserve the capability of the West to project its power overseas. Third, it would diminish the dangers of one country overturning the regional balance of power by acquiring these weapons. Fourth, it would strengthen our existing deterrent against a hostile nuclear superpower by preserving the West's powers of retaliation. And fifth, it would enhance diplomacy's power to restrain proliferation by diminishing the utility of offensive systems." Without that and other

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constructive measures, the next century may see a repeat of "1914 played on a somewhat larger stage."

"That need not come to pass if the Atlantic Alliance remains as it is today: in essence, America as the dominant power surrounded by allies which generally follow its lead. Such are the realities of population, resources, technology, and capital that if America remains the dominant partner in a united West, and militarily engaged in Europe, then the West can continue to be the dominant power in the world as a whole." NATO, she believes, should be expanded to include Poland, Hungary, and other Central European countries, and a new "Atlantic initiative" should bind Europe and the U.S. diplomatically, militarily, and economically.

On transatlantic economics she says: "I realize that this may not seem the most propitious moment in American politics to advocate a new trade agreement. But the arguments against free trade between advanced industrial countries and poor Third World ones—even if I accepted them, which I do not—certainly do not apply to a transatlantic free trade deal. Such a trade bloc would unite countries with similar incomes and levels of regulation. It would therefore involve much less disruption and temporary job loss—while still bringing significant gains in efficiency and prosperity. . . . And it would create a trade bloc of unparalleled wealth (and therefore influence) in world trade negotiations." Harking back to the days when people spoke more easily about a "special relationship" between Britain and the U.S., Lady Thatcher declared: "But it is the West—above all perhaps, the English-speaking peoples of the West—that has formed that system of liberal democracy which is politically dominant and which we all know offers the best hope of global peace and prosperity. In order to uphold these things, the Atlantic political relationship must be constantly nurtured and renewed."

Of course not everyone will be persuaded by Lady Thatcher's diagnosis and prescription for world affairs, but she is one of the most lucid and cant-free political figures on the world stage today, and what she said at Fulton deserves much more attention than it received. Particularly refreshing is her unabashed belief that the cause of freedom is, above all, a moral enterprise.

FT

THE EXTREMITY OF THE MAINSTREAM

In politics it matters a lot who gets described as "mainstream" and who as "extreme." And, of course, the media do the describing. Politicians who "defend a woman's right to choose" are mainstream. Those who would "ban abortion" are extreme. A new national survey by the Tarrance Group shows that only 13 percent of Americans favor unrestricted access to abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. That is the "mainstream" position. Fifty-two percent of Americans favor the outlawing of all abortions, or all abortions except the 1 percent (according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute) performed for rape/incest/life of mother. That is the "extreme" position. Go figure.

Almost any Republican who is "pro-choice" is described as a "moderate." The new thing is that it is now very widely recognized that, on abortion and much else, the mainstream media are far from the mainstream. "Moderate" and "mainstream" have become synonyms for the L-word that very few practicing politicians dare to use these days. In the last couple of months a number of books by academics have announced the revival of liberalism, but these volumes have about them a sweated tone of desperation. Of course such a revival will almost certainly happen at some point, but not for some years, I expect, and then liberalism redux may bear slight resemblance to the liberalism we have known.

Meanwhile, the increasingly marginal mainstream media will continue to depict as marginal the positions embraced by a majority of Americans. The consoling thing in all this is that the establishment media are not anywhere near so powerful as they, and their critics, claim. The next time you come across inflated claims about the omnipotence of communications in this "media age," prick the balloon with one word: Abortion. Twenty-three years ago, the establishment media, joined by almost every major institution in the country, unanimously declared that *Roe* had "settled" the abortion question. In fact, when the history of this period is rightly written, it will tell that *Roe*, more than any other single factor, radically destabilized our politics, with the result that a surprised and uncomprehending establishment frantically insists that the views of a small and declining minority really do, all appearances and election returns to the contrary, represent "the mainstream."

Maybe, they think, saying it often enough will make it so. That, combined with vesting their hopes in politicians of the left who campaign as conservatives, may restore the world that was before the "extremists" took over. What choice do such people have, except to admit that, just maybe, they got things wrong. Before doing that, the oracles who anchor the establishment networks and newsrooms will solemnly announce to the world that the American people have simply gone crazy. Not surprisingly, we are already getting books and articles reviving the contention that our

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constitutional order is in need of a major overhaul. The present system is simply ungovernable. And of course they're right: It is ungovernable, by them.

FT

While We're At It

■ Was it Aristotle who said that friendships are formed by shared delights? Or maybe our circulation manager was just making it up. In any event, he has this great idea that you might share your delight in FT by sending us names of family members, friends, and associates to whom we can send a sample issue. Mentioning that it was your idea of course. Reading FT might turn associates into friends, or at least into better-informed associates. Do send us that list soon. Like maybe today?

■ There is a good deal of talk these days about America's possibly being in the midst of a fourth Great Awakening—and about the social and political implications of that possibility. Michael Joyce of the Bradley Foundation recently addressed the 1994 congressional class on this theme, noting that the possible meaning of this historical moment "demands not only public pronouncement, but careful cultivation of our private character and prayerful attention to our personal spiritual lives, as well." Then an admonition that might well be inscribed on the walls of every congressional office, and other offices, too. "This is not to be undertaken lightly, nor in the spirit of partisanship. We stand in the presence of a power that is not to be trifled with. We invoke a name not to be taken in vain."

■ *Mother Jones* and *National Review* have in common that they both run ads, including classifieds. Tom Kuntz, a *New York Times* reporter, did a comparison of ads in "the leading glossy magazines of the two camps," left and right. In the mean-spirited gag category, *NR* offers "The Slick Willie Golf Ball—a good lie guaranteed!" *MJ* proposes, "Wipe that smile off Jesse Helms' face with high quality toilet tissue." In help for the lovelorn, *NR* has an "Ivy League of dating" to meet conservatives from prestige colleges, while *MJ* has "Le Erotica," a lesbian network. In the smoking department, *NR* pushes Rothschilds cigars and *MJ* has, "The Whole Hemp Catalog of legal cannabis products to stimulate your mind and body." With respect to hobbies, *NR* promotes a program to learn to read music and play the piano, while *MJ* invites readers to order "The Humpback Whale Adoption Kit." As for higher education, *NR* offers a Hillsdale College program in free market economics, and *MJ* touts the John F. Kennedy University Graduate School for Holistic Studies that specializes in "interdisciplinary consciousness studies." I'm not sure it's entirely fair to compare *Mother Jones* and *National Review*. Is *National Review* to the right what *Mother Jones* is to the left? Those on the left might well think so. And I'm not sure that Mr. Kuntz is entirely fair in the ads he selects, but the picture he presents is plausible. It does suggest that the left-right divide is near unbridgeable, and I expect that most Americans are decidedly on the right of it.

■ Don't hold it against Stanley Crouch that he got a MacArthur Foundation Genius Award. In his case, there really are signs of genius. Crouch, who recently published *All-American Skin Game*, has an essay in a book of many bright essays, *Reinventing the American People*, edited by Robert Royal (Eerdmans, 304 pp., $17 paper). He is holding forth in high style against the multiculturalists and their "inclusivism," which is, Crouch knows, just the old separatist arguments shoddily retreaded. Multiculturalism, of course, is premised upon our all being victims. "The politics of resentment is based most deeply on a denial of individual responsibility. The history of groups, or as the vastly over-estimated W. E. B. DuBois would have it, the history of races, is all. In this regard, the politics of resentment that lies directly behind 'multiculturalism' is built on the sense of having been had by some larger external force or by 'society' in general. If the resentful one is from a racial minority, the culprit is 'white racism'; if female, one may blame 'political testosterone poisoning.' All of these are variations on the child abuse defense—a dysfunctional family as the root of all wrong. As the comedian Dennis Miller recently observed on his cable show, 'Thanks to the notion of dysfunction, every zipperhead in this country can tap himself with a Freudian wand and go from failed frog to misunderstood prince.'" Crouch's advice is that we not panic in the face of this madness. "Just why has already been laid down by our best writers, musicians, and filmmakers—by people like Constance Rourke, John A. Kouwenhoven, Ralph Ellison, and Albert Murray. Here is the reality, straight, no chaser: The American is an incontestable mix of blood, style, and tradition. Part Yankee, part frontiersman, part Indian, part Negro, part Hispanic, part Asian, part Christian, part Jew. We hear this in our talk, we see it in the way we walk and the way we laugh, the gestures we use, the facial expressions we pass over ethnic fences, the foods we eat, and even the dreams we have. We will continue to reinterpret our interrelationships, regularly stretching the heroic into the angelic and turning the vile into the demonic. Yet we will continue to respond to each other's stylization of sensibility. Some narrative will come our way that allows us to

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be lyrically touched to the quick by an individual superficially unlike us. We will continue to reinvent our diets and make spiritual searches. We are hopeless experimenters and improvisers, just as we are hopeless suckers—never given an even break by those who wish to manipulate us through our curiosity and our willingness to engage in that good old American self-criticism. Not for very long will we be able to accept the visions of the separatists because our history, public and private, has proven to us over and over that we were made for each other. We will sometimes be knocked down to one knee. But we are too shot through with shared personal and historical resonances to separate. We are now and forever Americans, which means that we are in some very specific ways parts of all other peoples. Our culture and our bloodlines are cosmopolitan. No matter how hard we might try, we can't have it any other way."

■ Philip Jenkins, author of *Pedophiles and Priests* (Oxford University Press), has explained in these pages the various ends to which media sensationalism can be—and, in the case of clergy scandal, has been—employed ("The Uses of Clerical Scandal," February 1996). Mark Silk reviews Jenkins' book in the *New York Times Book Review* and asks if there is something "we can learn from this cultural episode to help keep future panics under control." More particularly, Silk asks why the news media were so ready to accept the ridiculously exaggerated estimates of clerical misconduct fed them by some experts. His answer: "These days, nothing is more seductive to reporters than the suggestion of a trend, pathological or otherwise. Call it the sociology disease; from the daily newspapers to the newsweeklies to the daytime television talk shows, the search for the trend du jour has become all-consuming. A good 'social problem' does provide moral cover for telling lurid stories, but it would be better for journalists to stick to the stories and take the experts with a grain of salt. They too have axes to grind, and there are fewer new things under the sun than are dreamed up in their philosophies."

■ "The dissolution of the modern world has come down to the core of the Church." When the noted historian John Lukacs wakes up in the middle of the night, that's the kind of thought he thinks. In his powerful memoir *Confessions of an Original Sinner*, he goes on to reflect that there is a kind of logic, both divine and human, to the *corruptio optimi pessima*. It would be puzzling to Lukacs if the best were not embroiled in the general decay. "Had the Church remained largely unaffected by the awful crisis of the modern world, this would have meant: a) that the crisis was not really that profound, or b) that the Church would have become ossified, superficially powerful, but only like the ancient monarchies before their fall." Those of a disposition different from that of Professor Lukacs might welcome evidence that the crisis is not really that profound. But then he discerns something that appears almost hopeful in the midst of the encroaching disaster. The great nineteenth-century historian Jakob Burckhardt, he says, "was probably quite right when he wrote that the Christian feelings of sinfulness and humility were feelings of which the ancient world had not been capable. This was a mutation of consciousness more important, and more profound, than the two great changes of the Modern Age: the development of the scientific method and the evolution of historical consciousness. I often feel that we are on the threshold of another great mutation, for all superficial and dreadful evidences to the contrary notwithstanding, sentiments of sinfulness and humility have not disappeared from the Western world. What has happened is that they have come far from being the near-monopoly of Christians. There exist many *animae naturaliter christianae* in this world now—whether they are aware of this or not. Perhaps that does not matter. What matters is that they are part and parcel of the evolving Christianization of the world, which includes the movement of mankind toward the end of the world." That prospect, however, is one of apocalypse more than consummation, for at the end of history, at the Second Coming, "mankind will again be divided between the camps of the Antichrist and the minority belonging to Christ." All this Professor Lukacs thinks when he wakes up in the middle of the night. Maybe it is what wakes him up. His is a vision of corruption and apocalypse shared by many Christians. He is also a Catholic, and his sense of things rings true to much that John Paul II, for instance, says in the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* and elsewhere about the reign of "the culture of death." But the Lukacs view of history seems incapable of accommodating what John Paul says about "the culture of life," about the Third Millennium as a "springtime of hope," about why we should live by the injunction, "Be not afraid." So is the Pope a cockeyed optimist? I think not. Few people alive have looked so unblinkingly into the face of evil, of all that this century has thrown up in defiance of hope. It is that irrepressible hope, grounded not in personal disposition but in divine promise, that protects against the disposition of world-weariness that wants the crisis to be as irredeemably profound as in our nightmares it appears to be.

■ From the Revelations Department. According to *Catholic Trends*, Father Joseph Fitzmyer of St. Patrick's College in Maynooth, Ireland, gave a paper listing the great benefits the Church has reaped from modern biblical studies. "Third," he said, "we learn that God's word did not drop from heaven, in King James English to boot, but that it

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has come to us from a venerable Jewish and Christian heritage." I hope you're ready for that.

■ I did that little whimsical (I thought) comment on plagiarism, "He Who Steals My Words . . . ," and the letters are still pouring in. One reader accused me of whining. Several clergy wrote guilt-ridden admissions that they had been "stealing" from the magazine without citing the source, and promised never to do it again. At least two readers sent gotcha missives, noting that I violated my own rules by not giving Shakespeare credit for the title. My response to that is that anybody who didn't immediately recognize the reference to Shakespeare shouldn't be reading First Things. That's a category I failed to mention: citations so familiar that to cite the source is to insult the reader. And one reader supplied this pertinent bon mot from Pascal, for which you might find a use: "Words are like tennis balls—not only were they made to be volleyed back and forth, but the return is often defter than the serve." And now I promise never to mention plagiarism again, unless unduly provoked.

■ "St. Mugg" they called him. I met Malcolm Muggeridge only once, shortly after the appearance of the second volume of his magnificent memoirs, *Chronicles of Wasted Time*. He was as completely charming as his reputation led one to believe. I told him how much I was looking forward to the third volume, and he assured me it was in the works, which is what he told everyone, but it never appeared. According to Richard Ingrams' *Muggeridge* (HarperCollins, 264 pp., $27.95), he never did seriously work on the third volume, and that may be just as well. Ingrams was a friend of Muggeridge, but his biography does not disguise his dislike of the memoir, which, he says, gives the false impression of great continuity in Muggeridge's thinking over the years. From the early years on, says Ingrams, there was only one very big idea that Muggeridge got right and stayed with—the horror of communism and the hypocrisy of its Western apologists. When, later in life, Muggeridge became a Christian and entered the Catholic Church, he was much celebrated as an apologist for the faith. Some even claimed he was a greater apologist than C. S. Lewis. In a manner friendly but firm, Ingrams insists that Muggeridge was essentially a publicist who lived on his inexhaustible charm, frequently and deliberately giving the impression that he had read and thought about matters a great deal more than was the case. Only those who knew Muggeridge intimately (he died November 14, 1990) can judge the merits of Ingrams' claim. The undeniable fact is that Muggeridge wrote like an angel, and he had a divine gift for eliciting from others second thoughts about the things that matter most. Now I see that another and much larger biography by Gregory Wolfe is out in England. It will undoubtedly be published here soon, and I will undoubtedly be turning my mind again to the irresistible "St. Mugg." We old contrarians have to stick together, and those of us blessed with less charm and talent will long be drawing on the master, remembering his maxim that "Only dead fish swim with the tide."

■ The baroque period in Catholicism is past. That announcement, however belated, is made by Father Thomas O'Meara of the University of Notre Dame in *America*, the Jesuit magazine. "Protestant discerners of a 'Catholic moment,'" says O'Meara, do not have "much idea about where the Catholic Church stands now in history." Later on he criticizes "a Lutheran convert who admires the trappings and autocracy of the Vatican bureaucracy of the late nineteenth century." I wonder who he could be talking about. Just in case, and for the record, I despise autocracy of any century and have a very selective admiration for trappings. Fr. O'Meara begins his article with the wise observation of C. S. Lewis that the period people consider to be full of antiquity is usually the one just before their own. He might have balanced that with the observation that the period people consider to be full of novelty is usually the one that is in its death throes. For instance, Fr. O'Meara's claim: "A journey from the immediate past alongside modernity into what is new—that is the Catholic destiny." One may be permitted to suggest that discerners of a "Catholic destiny" that is linked to the fate of modernity do not "have much idea about where the Catholic Church (or the world) stands now in history."

■ Christians have been wrestling with the Sermon on the Mount for almost two millennia and nobody's likely to get the definitive resolution of its moral challenges any time soon. Some proposed resolutions are less believable than others, however. The writer of the homily helper in *America*, for instance, is a strong opponent of capital punishment and of Christians who support even what he calls "just wars." He says he was made uneasy about his "facile arguments against capital punishment" when the daughter of a friend of his was murdered in a particularly terrible manner. Great was his relief when his friend told him the family was "trying to convince the prosecutors that we want life imprisonment without parole and not the death penalty. He doesn't understand that we follow Christ in all this." The *America* writer comments that his friend "really aspired to a love made perfect in the Crucified who asked forgiveness for enemies." As Jesus presumably said on the mount, "If anyone kills your daughter, put him in prison and keep him there for the rest of his life, even if he begs to be killed rather than to suffer such a fate." There are good arguments against capital punishment. Among them is not the claim that sentencing someone to life

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imprisonment without parole is the fulfillment of what the Sermon on the Mount says about forgiving enemies.

■ I haven't had a chance to get to Walter Wangerin's *The Book of God: The Bible as a Novel* (Zondervan), but was struck by the brief review in *Publishers Weekly*. It said some people will really like what Wangerin has done; "for others, however, the novel will feel like an ornate but pale imitation of a great book." Envision a Bible publisher putting the blurb on the cover: "A great book—*Publishers Weekly*."

■ "It is perfectly legitimate and even admirable for Americans to promote their personal beliefs through either religious or political processes." That generous sentiment is offered by former President Jimmy Carter in a column in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. But Mr. Carter does insist that we must draw the line somewhere, and he thinks he knows just where. "I have in mind more emotional issues: abortion and homosexuality." Mr. Carter says that "leaders of the highly organized Christian right have injected into America's political debate some divisive religious questions." Divisive questions, it seems, tend to generate controversy. "The most vivid examples," the former President continues, "involve sexual preferences, which obviously have highly personal and emotional overtones." Obviously. Carter says, "Pressures from the more extreme religious activists have pushed almost every candidate to demagoguery, emphasizing vicious attacks on gay men and women, ostensibly based on the teachings of Jesus Christ." If we understand him, almost every candidate in this political season—or just Republican candidates? or just Republican presidential candidates?—have advocated vicious attacks on gays in the name of Jesus Christ. We try to stay informed, but clearly we've missed something. "We must make it clear," concludes Mr. Carter, "that a platform of 'I hate gay men and women' is not a way to become President of the United States of America." It is good to have that cleared up, as it is good to be reminded of the apt fit between Mr. Carter's insightfulness and the office of former President.

■ But would you want to live with one? Gallup asked teenagers getting ready for college what kind of person they might want to room with. Asked about people belonging to various groups, most teenagers said it would make no difference to them. But 3 percent say they would not want to room with a Christian, 9 percent don't want a Jewish roommate, 10 percent nix a born-again Christian, 14 percent would be uncomfortable with a member of the religious right, 19 percent say no to a Muslim, and 29 percent prefer not to live with an atheist or agnostic. You figure it out, we just report these things. The teens were also asked, "Have you heard or read anything about the 'religious right,' which is sometimes called the 'Christian right'?" Then they were asked whether they themselves are members of the religious right. It turns out that 42 percent are aware of the religious right and 16 percent say they are members. Now we would like to know whether the 14 percent who would not want to room with a member of the religious right are drawn from the 42 percent who are aware of the religious right. If 16 percent belong to the religious right, that would seem to account for the 12 percent who would like a religious right roommate. And are to we to infer that 4 percent of the religious right do not really like religious righters? Another interesting twist: 16 percent of teenagers who identify themselves as Republican say they are members of the religious right, compared with 24 percent of Democrats. In the same numbers bundle from Gallup, it is noted that church attendance continues to edge upwards. In 1995, 43 percent of adults said they attended church or synagogue in the last seven days. That's up from 40 percent in 1993. The high, since such figures were kept, was 49 percent in 1958, and the low was 37 percent in 1940. So now you know.

■ Why not? Some things are unthinkable until much public attention and chatter make them almost commonplace. For instance, suicide was on the decrease from the 1940s until 1980. Then "death with dignity" became a hot topic and suicides increased. According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicides among elderly Americans jumped 9 percent from 1980 to 1992. Of course there are more elderly Americans now, but we're talking about the *rate* of suicide. Barbara Haight, an expert on elderly suicide, says the rise of the right-to-die movement and people such as Jack Kevorkian has made suicide acceptable to many: "They see it as a solution to their problems." The rise in suicides also affects young people. Oregon's state health division reports an all-time record number of suicides since 1994, the year the Hemlock Society successfully lobbied for an assisted-suicide initiative. The increase, boosted by a 26 percent increase in suicides among 15- to 24-year-olds, gave Oregon a suicide rate 37 percent higher than the national average. Some things are unthinkable until, on second thought and many thoughts after that, we are led to ask, Why not?

■ Herds of independent academic minds congregate at the annual convention of the Modern Language Association (MLA), and we thought you might be interested in some of the offerings at the 1996 assembly of the faithful in Washington. There is a panel on "Queering the Renaissance: Comparative Continental Perspectives," and three panels on "Victorian Sexual Dissidence," which will address "male-male sexual dissidence," "female-feminist aestheticism," and then a subject of particular interest to those who are weary of the conventional,

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"revisionary decadence." The thousands of MLA believers will be treated to the usual fare, such as "The Novel, Queer Theory, and Narrativity," plus "Androgyny and Absolutism: The figure of the androgyne, especially in courtly society, as well as theories of same-sex gender paradigms and their relations to forms of power." There are hundreds of such items on the program, covering all the things that parents send their children to college to learn. One panel reflects a candor bordering on incorrectness and might be real fun: "Famous Books You Have Not Read. Famous texts you have discussed, evaluated, cited, taught, or bought but have not read. Blurb, acknowledgments, or bibliography scanning as reading. Strong versus weak not reading. General theories, dissimulation strategies, confessions." Confessions yet. The mandarins of the MLA would be well advised to nip such honesty in the bud before it panics the herd. Dissimulation strategies, once exposed, lose much of their utility, and the idea that teachers should read the texts they teach would put a serious dent in time available for academic conventions. Such radical ideas have no place in an academic association famously devoted to radical ideas.

■ The Chinese, and Asians more generally, are widely criticized for the overtness of their preference for boy babies over girl babies. But one wonders if that's so unusual. If, God forbid, we like China had a one-baby-per-couple law, I expect there would be a steep rise in female infanticide. Already, abortion for sex selection in this country results in many more girls than boys being killed in the womb. Long-term readers know that I keep my feminist sympathies in close check, but for years I've been following reports on the names people give their children. With the new reports from New York City, San Francisco, Texas, and Florida, the pattern continues. As reflected by the names chosen, people obviously take boys more seriously than girls. In all four places, people give boys—white, black, and Hispanic—names of clear biblical or religious significance. For instance, Michael, Christopher, Anthony, Jonathan, Daniel, John, Joseph, Matthew, David, and Joshua. (In Florida—and oddly enough not in Texas—Tyler and Austin make the top ten.) Girls, on the other hand, get cute, toy-like names, names of jewelry stores and soap stars: Ashley, Jessica, Samantha, Amanda, Nicole, Tiffany, Taylor, Jennifer, and Brittany. Sarah and Rachel make the top ten for white girls. Black girls have it worst, with names such as Jasmine, Brianna, Diamond, Crystal, Amber, and Chelsea (the last is big in Texas). Maria makes the top ten for Hispanic girls, although not in New York City, and not at the very top anywhere, which seems surprising given the Marian devotion in Spanish culture. Think of the great names not chosen: Naomi, Rebecca, Ruth, Anne, Elizabeth, Judith, Teresa, Faith, Hope, and on and on. One need not be a raving feminist to get the message: girls are cute, boys are for real. Of course it is true, girls are cute. But in bestowing a name on a child we say something about heritage and aspiration. We say something about what we hope the child will grow up to be. What is a child to think her parents thought of her when she has to go through life with the name of Crystal, Amber, or Tiffany? So all right, maybe it's not among the top ten problems in American society, but I can't squelch the suspicion that it's not unimportant.

■ A couple of issues back I wrote this item, "Against Christian Politics," which touched on the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount. A reader of Mennonite persuasion complains that I "postpone the demands of the Sermon until the eschaton." That's not quite right, but I do think the eschatological dimension is essential to understanding the Sermon on the Mount, in both its Matthew and Luke versions. In the *Christian Century*, Garrett E. Paul of Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota comes up with a typology of readings of these endlessly discussed texts. There are four categories of interpretation: "1) The demands are attainable by some and required only of those who can attain them (the Roman Catholic interpretation). 2) The demands are attainable by none but required of all (the Lutheran interpretation). 3) The demands are attainable by and required of all believers (the sectarian interpretation). 4) The demands are identical with the best in all cultures and attainable by the best people in all cultures (the cultural-liberal interpretation)." That's both interesting and helpful, although he's wrong to say that the Catholic view is that the demands are "attainable only by priests, monks, and nuns." Were that the case, there would be no lay saints, when in fact there are thousands officially recognized and innumerable others not recognized. What he calls the Lutheran interpretation, of course, underscores the foundation of Christian existence in the *sola fides*. Another Catholic way of putting it is that the Sermon presents a way of life that is to be aspired to by all, that by divine grace is attained by some within the limits of a fallen creation, and that will be fully realized in the Kingdom of God. This view takes into account those who aspire to whatever of the good, true, and beautiful is available to them, thus including an aspect of what Garrett Paul calls the "cultural-liberal interpretation." For all the usefulness of typologies and models in helping us to get alternatives fixed in our minds, they almost inevitably cut corners on the complexity of things. In any event, when Christians stop arguing with one another over the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount, we will be in worse trouble than we are.

■ When Nathan Glazer wrote *American Judaism* in

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1957, he did not invoke the term "Holocaust" even once. One of the great surprises of recent years, says Elliott Abrams, who is soon to publish his own book on the state of American Jewry, is that the Holocaust has become more important to Jewish identity than the Torah, God, or the state of Israel. Abrams, who has succeeded George Weigel as president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., is reviewing a book by Michael Goldberg, *Why Should Jews Survive?* (Oxford University Press) in which Goldberg deplores the fact that community after community is investing in Holocaust museums and monuments, "flagrantly disregarding the Jewish tradition of avoiding shrines to the dead." (In his own forthcoming book, Abrams notes some ironies of assimilationism in the monument-building business. For instance, the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., is open on Yom Kippur but closed on Christmas Day.) According to Goldberg, the linchpin of Jewish identity must be the covenant with the God of Israel "who sees to the survival of His people." Why does He do so? Because Jews "are the linchpin in His redemption of the world." Abrams has considerable sympathy for this more theological understanding of Judaism, and one notes that Goldberg's essential point has been powerfully made by others, including Michael Wyschogrod, David Novak, and Jacob Neusner. Abrams has little or no sympathy, however, for Goldberg's anti-Zionism and his suggestion that Jews have forfeited their right to the land of Israel because they have failed to observe the laws of Leviticus regarding the proper treatment of strangers, meaning the Palestinians. American Jewry is in numerical and moral decline, according to Abrams and others, because Jews in America have so largely abandoned any distinctively Jewish reason for being. To the extent that most Jews have anything like a "faith," it is faith in survivalism and secularism. Goldberg, says Abrams, addresses "questions of some importance that provide material for a wise and thoughtful book." He reluctantly concludes, "This is not it."

■ A great favorite of journalists who do not like the Catholic Church is Bishop Jacques Gaillot, formerly of the French diocese of Evreux. Formerly, because the Pope finally removed him after a long career of highly publicized dissent from Catholic teaching. So here's a story about him in the *New Yorker* by Adam Gopnik. The bishop got in trouble, we are told, because he took an interest in helping homeless people in Paris. Of course. "Bishop Gaillot is an extraordinarily low-key and gentle man whose parishioners find it hard to picture him in a mitre. He often dresses in mufti—black turtleneck and suit—with a small silver cross in his lapel the only sign of his vocation." Of course again. But the only reason he is a celebrity among French anticlericalists, and the only reason he is profiled in the *New Yorker*, is that he is a bishop of the Catholic Church who properly wears a mitre. Otherwise, he would be just another low-key and gentle man who is sorry for poor people, and of no conceivable interest to the likes of Adam Gopnik. His interest is entirely derivative from the office that he appears to scorn and that those who celebrate him make no secret of scorning. This is sometimes called the sterility of dissent, although it has a wondrous way of reproducing itself, and probably always will so long as there is the foil of faithfulness on which it parasitically feeds. I don't know Bishop Gaillot, and he may be a fine man. But this profile is simply another in a long and tedious succession of confirmations that, to a certain media mindset, the only good Catholic is a bad Catholic.

■ Across the political spectrum, there is increasing discontent with an "imperial court"—meaning the Supreme Court but also the judiciary more generally—that short circuits the democratic process by arrogating to itself the moral judgments that are the appropriate province of the legislature. Following the maxim that the best defense is an offense, Ronald Dworkin, mandarin of law at Oxford and New York University, says that the Court is the final political arbiter. That truth is now entrenched in "unchallengeable precedent" and alternatives to it "long excluded" by history. So we had better just get used to it. In a new book, *Freedom's Law: The Moral Reading of the Constitution* (Harvard University Press), Dworkin challenges those who say that the Court is operating in an "absolutist" or dictatorial fashion, noting that there are social, political, and legal limits on what it can do—at least for the time being. And he is again dismissive of the "originalists," such as Judge Robert Bork, who say judges are to stick with what the Constitution actually says, and is equally dismissive of revered figures such as Judge Learned Hand who contend that judges should not negate legislative acts with their own reading of "moral principles" they find in the Constitution. Dworkin's own view is that judges are, quite literally, making it up as they go along, and that is the way it should be. As he puts it, "Judges are like authors jointly creating a chain novel in which each writes a chapter that makes sense as part of the story as a whole." What is the moral authority of such "moral readings" of the Constitution? What is the constitutional authority for such readings? Isn't this an antidemocratic denial of "majoritarian political processes"? Those are all very interesting questions, says Dworkin, but quite beside the point. "There is no genuine alternative" to the judge as novelist, he says. Or, if there are alternatives, they have been excluded by "unchallengeable precedent" and "history." In so boldly throwing down the gauntlet against the foundational presuppositions of democratic governance and republican legitimacy, Ronald

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Dworkin may elicit a more effective challenge against the imperial judiciary. It is not the service that he intended to render, but it is a service nonetheless.

■ The superiority of human beings over other animal life is much exaggerated, according to those on the cutting edge, so to speak, of environmental philosophy. Curtis Hancock, professor of philosophy at Rockhurst College, discovered this when invited to participate in a panel at a distinguished university. He soon found himself isolated and besieged. In desperation, he tried an illustration he had learned from Russell Hittinger. "Suppose you're walking down the street and you discover a house on fire. You rush inside to rescue the inhabitants. You discover there are only two: a human infant and a caged squirrel. Surely, if you could only save one, the infant would be the moral choice." Not so fast, responded the other panelists. Is the infant healthy? Is the squirrel a member of an endangered species? The qualifications came hot and heavy, leading Professor Hancock to something akin to despair. "If you hold that humans are superior to squirrels in nature and moral consideration, you are likely to be dismissed as a kook; if you declare that animal lives might be more valuable than disabled humans, you're applauded as a sage." It is perhaps noteworthy that only human animals of the academic type were invited to participate on the panel, despite the evidence that their superiority is greatly exaggerated. (This is as good an occasion as any to congratulate Russell Hittinger, a frequent contributor, on his appointment to a newly established chair in Catholic studies at the University of Tulsa. Or, more accurately, to congratulate Tulsa, a non-Catholic university, on establishing the chair and filling it with a philosopher of such distinction.)

■ "Brother Bob Smith, a Capuchin monk and former parole officer, never imagined he'd be the subject of a modern-day inquisition. His purported crime was heresy, but not heresy against the church. Smith had run afoul of an agency far more powerful in the modern world—the school bureaucracy." Brother Bob is principal of Messmer High School on Milwaukee's Near North Side. It is a very good school, most of whose students are not Catholic. Writing in the *American Spectator*, Daniel McGroarty notes that in the same neighborhood, public school students walk through metal detectors and the majority never get diplomas. In the same world of gangs, drugs, and guns, Messmer graduates 98 percent and sends 79 percent of its students on to college. But, of course, it is Messmer that is on trial. The trial was precipitated by Messmer's application to participate in an innovative program of education vouchers for poor children. The teachers unions that run Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction (DPI) are fanatically opposed to parental school choice in principle, and drew a firm line against Messmer, claiming that it is "pervasively religious." DPI sent sleuths to the school to search for suspicious signs of "sectarianism." After hours of investigation, they failed to find any evidence that Messmer is in the proselytizing business, although they did come across sports trophies indicating that Messmer students played in the local Catholic conference. And extended hearings conducted by DPI counsel Robert Paul turned up other damaging evidence. For instance, the head of the Capuchins in Rome is answerable to the Pope, thereby establishing to DPI's satisfaction that there is a "direct line between the Pope and Brother Bob." As though that were not bad enough, Messmer has a small chapel where a private Mass is occasionally celebrated. DPI attorney Paul asked whether consecrated hosts are kept there and Brother Bob said not. Nothing daunted, Mr. Paul moved in for the kill. Here is the transcript: "Mr. Paul: Let me get a clarification regarding the consecrated hosts . . . not being resident on the premises in the chapel. But . . . it's true that at any of the masses that occur throughout the year, hosts are consecrated at those masses. Brother Bob: Yes. Mr. Paul: And in the Catholic faith, that's the conversion of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ Jesus. Brother Bob: That's correct. Mr. Paul: And that takes place at the mass, and then those articles of bread and wine are consumed. Brother Bob: Yes. Mr. Paul: Then they are no longer on the premises. Brother Bob: That's correct. Mr. Paul: Then—in the time between consecration and consumption—then the consecrated host of the blessed sacrament is present. Brother Bob: That's correct. Mr. Paul: With that clarification, that ends my cross [examination]." Mr. McGroarty comments: "Paul's persistence paid off. Brother Bob may have testified that Messmer's chapel was not a church; yet, however fleetingly, Jesus had been placed at the scene. And that was too much for the bureaucrats. There were the Catholic Conference trophies, the Capuchin monk-principal, the specter of the Pope, the nondenominational prayers over the school PA, the funds from a philanthropic organization that was not itself tied to the church but targeted much of its giving to religious organizations—and now the body of Jesus Christ. Months later, in a passage near the end of its brief on the case, the DPI refused to identify Messmer as a school at all—they called it a church." That is not the end of the story. On July 26, 1995, Governor Tommy Thompson signed legislation expanding the parental choice program to include religious schools. The signing took place in Messmer's gymnasium. The teachers union and the ACLU immediately sued to keep Messmer and a hundred other religious schools out of the voucher program. The court enjoined the program, forcing thousands

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of low-income families to scramble for tuition, or return their children to public schools. It is expected that the Wisconsin State Supreme Court will render a decision soon. Especially piquant, we thought, is a militantly secularist agency of the state attending with such care to the niceties of the metaphysical status of the host in the time between consecration and consumption. Even the ACLU might think it a little odd that the state of Wisconsin implicitly endorses the doctrine of transubstantiation in order to demonstrate a violation of the separation of church and state.

■ Ron Sider, president of Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA), took some flack when he declared that "no law which legitimizes the direct killing of innocent human beings through abortion can be just." And some more flack when he insisted that heterosexuality and marriage ought to be the social norm. The occasion was a meeting of the "Call to Action" alliance led by Sider and Jim Wallis of *Sojourners* that wants to counter the influence of the Christian Coalition and similar groups in the 1996 election. The meeting left some with the impression that the alliance is held together chiefly by its dislike for the religious right. "It's unclear what their goals and objectives are," said Mike Russell, communications director for the Christian Coalition. "They're making the same mistake Jerry Falwell did in the seventies, parading in front of cameras without any real substance or grassroots momentum." Keith Pavlischek, who directs the policy department of ESA, said, "This is unlikely to go anywhere unless they make a very clear statement on the sanctity of unborn human life and clear statement on Christian marriage. The equivocation by some key leaders in the Call on these issues is a call for concern." Sider is somewhat, but just somewhat, more hopeful: "I remain uncertain whether it will be possible to develop a common agenda that is truly pro-life, pro-family, and pro-poor. But I wouldn't bet all my pension that it can't be done." Nor that it can.

■ It is one of President Clinton's better ideas, a "National Campaign to Reduce Teen Pregnancy." Appointed by Mr. Clinton to head up the campaign are Dr. Henry Foster, failed nominee for Surgeon General, Whoopi Goldberg, and Judy McGrath, president of MTV. All are strong proponents of "abortion rights." In her autobiography, Ms. Goldberg says she had five or six abortions (she does not remember precisely) before age twenty-five. Another source puts her total number of abortions at eleven. MTV's contribution to reducing teen pregnancy has been mostly soft porn with intermittent "public service" ads promoting condoms. At his nomination hearings, Dr. Foster, who had difficulty remembering whether he had performed twenty or two hundred abortions, was praised for the abstinence component of his "I Have a Future" (IHAF) program in Nashville. Then it was revealed that the abstinence part had been slipped into the program after the announcement of his nomination. IHAF was in fact just another sex ed/condom handout program with, says the Family Research Council, predictable results: "Participants in the program actually showed *higher* rates of sexual activity than those outside the program, according to a Carnegie Corporation evaluation." Commenting on President Clinton's teen pregnancy initiative, *Life Insight* asks: "What next? Beavis and Butthead as cochairs of a National Literacy Campaign? Howard Stern in charge of a crusade to curb broadcast smut? Smith & Wesson funding a national drive to ban handguns, with Clint Eastwood as its celebrity spokesperson?" Actually, rumor has it that Don Imus was scheduled to head up the smut crusade, until that media dinner last March at which the President and First Lady were not amused.

■ Sometimes the separation of religion from public life is necessary for decency's sake. Ruth Westheimer, who as "Dr. Ruth" has gotten impressive mileage out of talking dirty in public under the guise of being a sexologist, says that there's no mention of sex at the Passover seder in her home. "I'm keeping all of that life of mine separate from my family," she said. Chalk up another convert to the pro-family cause. She has had notable guests at her seder, including Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong of Newark. One would not be surprised if he was disappointed with the table talk.

■ Gustav Niebuhr, grandson of the noted Reinhold, is a religion reporter for the *New York Times*, and he has this story on the strange people the FBI has holed up in Montana. It seems that some of them subscribe to the bizarre "Christian Identity" doctrine that God created Aryans but Jews are descended from hanky panky between Eve and Satan. The Rev. Helen Young, who serves Lutheran and Presbyterian churches in Jordan, Montana, is quoted as saying that Christian Identity teaching is "disgusting." But then comes a much more potent anathema as Mr. Niebuhr reports that it is "a belief system condemned by the National Council of Churches." That Christian Identity is incoherent, unbiblical, contrary to two millennia of Church teaching, and plain nutty certainly raises serious questions about it. But condemned by the National Council of Churches! That settles it.

■ Surely not another book on abortion. *The Silent Subject: Reflections on the Unborn in American Culture*, edited by Brad Stetson (Praeger), is not just another book. These thirteen essays, written from a pro-life perspective, bring together the arguments of some of the wisest minds who have been contemplating the abortion catastrophe over the

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years. I was pleased to be asked to contribute the foreword. Herewith my final paragraph: "Essays in this volume make the compelling case that women, too, are often 'the silent subject' in abortion. As this controversy has developed it has become increasingly obvious that the dispute is not between men and women. We must also hope that it will become more evident that the dispute is not simply between those who call themselves pro-life and those who call themselves pro-choice. Nor is it a dispute between the religious and the secular. All those divides are pertinent to the dispute, but finally the questions facing all of us have to do with the definition of humanity, the criteria for membership in the political community, the basis of our civilization's claims about human rights, and our responsibility to those who cannot protect themselves. When, God willing, the abortion controversy is behind us, partisans of the pro-life and pro-choice positions are going to have to live together in this society. That is why, while sloganeering and passionate polemics are inevitable, civil conversation is essential. And that is why *The Silent Subject* is such a gift to all of us at this point in the controversy."

■ A court in Hawaii will be trying the question of whether the state has a "compelling interest" in forbidding the legal recognition of same-sex "marriages." The result could be binding on all the states under the Constitution's provision that the acts of one state be accorded "full faith and credit" by the others. As of this writing, public opinion in Hawaii is turning strongly against the same-sex proposal, but then courts have long since moved beyond the old idea that, in a democracy, the people should make the laws. Richard Brookhiser comments: "Social conservatives have already begun piling up legal sandbags in Hawaii and other states, and at the Federal level. A flugelman for the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund characterized these efforts as 'shut[ting] down the nation's discussion . . . before most Americans have even had a chance to think about it.' That must be why Lambda decided to make its case in the Supreme Court of Hawaii, because that's where most Americans do their thinking."

■ From Pepperdine University Ron Highfield sends a *Los Angeles Times* cartoon by Conrad, published a few days after Easter. The legend underneath the cartoon reads, "If Michelangelo were to paint God today . . ." The picture is of skeletons surrounding the shrouded image of Death, who is reaching out his hand to man. Inscribed on the clouds are the words "Lebanon, Bosnia, Rwanda, Uganda, Liberia, Nigeria." The unmistakable message is that, if there is a God, he is undoubtedly evil. This is the paper that refused to publish Johnny Hart's "B.C." comic strip for Easter because it alluded to Christian hope and the *Los Angeles Times* said it did not want to offend its religiously pluralistic readership, etc.

■ This is a first. One of the less pleasant of editorial tasks is rejecting manuscripts, and of course we have to reject many times more than we accept. Sometimes they are good articles but we can't use them for various reasons, frequently because we have other pieces on the same topic. "I wonder if you know how it feels to be rejected," writes one disappointed author. Now we do. A New York agent sent us a chapter from a forthcoming book on Edith Stein, and we thought it was great. But then the agent, being unfamiliar with FT, had second thoughts. Told that the journal was edited by a Catholic priest, she responded very negatively. Our associate editor opined that, after all, the Pope is a pretty good guy. "Oh please," said the agent, "the Pope hates women." The upshot is that she withdrew the article and now we know how it feels to be rejected. One expects that Edith Stein, who was killed as a Jew and died as a Catholic at Auschwitz, would be distressed by the perdurance of vulgar prejudice.

■ Episcopal Bishop John W. Howe of Florida spoke for many Episcopalians after a group of bishops decided in May that ordaining an openly non-celibate homosexual person violates neither the doctrine nor the discipline of the Episcopal Church. Bishop Howe wrote to the members of his diocese: "As your bishop, I said in my Address to our Convention back in January that I believed a finding by the Court that the Episcopal Church has no ('Core') doctrine vis-à-vis human sexuality would be tantamount to abandoning orthodoxy and embracing apostasy—on this particular point, at least, I reiterate that conviction now. That is an extremely serious charge to make, and I do not make it lightly. I have also said that I personally cannot and will not support an apostate Church. I reiterate that commitment as well. I take no pleasure in doing so. There are those who will see these issues as peripheral—matters about which we can agree to disagree. Please be aware that the other side does not see them that way. Bishop Spong of Newark has recently said that the Episcopal Church is engaged in a battle to the death over these issues. On this point, at least, he and I are in complete agreement." Other bishops have made similarly strong statements. It would seem that one cannot return to bishoping as usual in a church that one believes to be apostate. It is not extreme to think that the Episcopal Church may indeed be battling itself to death.

■ He's heard from people all over the world, and we're told that the response has been overwhelmingly favorable. The global newsboard lit

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up when Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz of Lincoln, Nebraska, told his people that membership in some organizations is incompatible with being in communion with the Catholic Church. "Contumacious persistence in such membership" beyond a date certain would mean automatic (*ipso facto latae sententiae*) excommunication. Proscribed organizations include Planned Parenthood, the Hemlock Society, and Masonic groups, as well as ultratraditionalist Catholic movements that reject the Second Vatican Council as heretical. But the big fuss has been over the proscription of Call to Action, a national group that advocates, inter alia, the ordination of women and artificial contraception. Apparently the bishop's action was precipitated by the organizing of a Nebraska chapter of Call to Action. He was not amused by the "creed" recited in the Mass for the founding meeting, which began with "I believe in people and in a world in which it is good to live for all humankind." Dogmatic nitpicker that he is, the bishop complained about the omission of any mention of God. Nor did he think the conclusion of the creed passes theological muster: "And I believe in the resurrection—whatever it may mean. Amen." Lincoln is a small but flourishing diocese of somewhat less than ninety thousand Catholics that has, through forceful episcopal leadership, largely escaped the theological, liturgical, and moral commotions experienced by Catholicism elsewhere. Bruskewitz says his priests back his action "100 percent." He does not think it would have worked had he not attached penalties to the prohibition of membership in the organizations. "A mere prohibition would simply be relegated to 'his opinion vs. ours' with no hope of success," he said. The prospect of being excommunicated in a month wonderfully concentrates the Catholic mind. While it is generally agreed that Bishop Bruskewitz acted within canon law, there is much dispute about whether such a pastoral measure would be wise or effective in other and less cohesive dioceses. It might be especially problematic in those dioceses with bishops who belong to Call to Action.

■ *Origins* is a publication of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), and the same issue that gives a half-page to events in Lincoln devotes eleven full pages to an address by Bishop Howard Hubbard of Albany, New York, "A Vision for Parish Planning and Restructuring." "We must develop communities," he says, "which witness to the fact that we are concerned about persons and personal values, and the signs of that concern will be acts of warmth, kindness, and presence among the members." We do not credit the rumor that Bishop Hubbard authored the above-mentioned "creed" of Call to Action, since in his eleven close-printed pages there are at least three references to God. The bishop thinks parishes should reach out to Catholics alienated by the rigidity of the Church's teaching and suggests that some parishes "can most effectively fulfill their mission only by working in concert with neighboring parish communities or working on an ecumenical or interfaith basis." This does not mean backing off from Catholic particularities, but is rather an opportunity for "sharing our Catholic values, beliefs, and traditions with others." Bishop Hubbard concludes with a stirringly vapid vision of the "golden opportunity of being forerunners of the church of tomorrow, of being molders and builders of new theological language and ecclesial structures which speak to our contemporary society and which ensure a fresh hearing for the Christian message." It is very important to communicate the Christian message. Whatever that is—as they are no longer permitted to say in Lincoln.

■ "What I really like about the Public Square," says one reader, "is that it is never polemical." Well, I wouldn't go that far. One does try to be kind, however, and, when that's not always possible, at least civil. If that intention is not always evident in what is said here, it is perhaps because the reader does not see what I refrained from saying. So what is all this leading up to? There is this news clipping about Episcopal Bishop William Swing of San Francisco, who has come up with the idea of launching an organization called United Religions. Based in San Francisco and modeled on the United Nations, it will create a permanent assembly with the purpose of "eliminating violence" in the world. He says the idea came to him after a sleepless night "musing about how little religions have done for world peace." (Now watch the kindness swing into play.) This is a really dumb idea. I would say spectacularly dumb, but that would imply that there is something innovative about it. We already have the World Conference on Religion and Peace, perennial world parliaments of religion, the World Council of Churches, and efforts such as Father Hans Küng's scheme for global reconciliation through raised consciousness in communion with spotted owls. One way to be kind is to be condescending and say such initiatives are "idealistic." A proposal such as Bishop Swing's United Religions is not idealistic. It is self-indulgent sentimentality, and dangerous sentimentality at that. I have no doubt that the bishop is sincere. More's the pity. But it's utter rot (that's the phrase that got through the kindness filter) to suggest that, in a fallen world, good intentions of the religious kind can be substituted for the economic, political, and military factors that make for what St. Augustine called "the peace of order" (*tranquillitas ordinis*). It is the dangerous sentimentality that earlier in this century had to be challenged so sharply by Christian thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr. Today, after the Cold War and all that, it might be argued that we can afford to be more indulgent toward self-indulgent sentimentality, but that is wishful

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thinking in a world that remains a dangerous place. In addition to confusing people about what is required to maintain a modicum of order in a disordered world, conceits such as United Religions reflect an unseemly assumption on the part of religious leaders that they possess a measure of wisdom and righteousness denied to lesser breeds. I will not even mention the idea's provenance in San Francisco, that sceptered isle of swinging silliness, lest the reader mentioned at the outset think this outburst has crossed the line into the polemical.

■ When the *Utne Reader* published the list of finalists in its "Eighth Annual Alternative Press Awards," FT was among them. Alternative press? And here we thought we were the mainstream. They had these different categories, such as "Investigative Reporting," "Service," and "Cultural Issues." FT was in the category of "Emerging Issues." Emerging issues? And here we thought the whole point of first things is that they've been around from the beginning. It would make more sense to put us in the category of of "Reemerging Issues." Still, it's nice to be mentioned.

■ For several years we have had good things to say about various things said by Dennis Prager, the radio commentator, journalist, and author. His reflections on the benefits (and drawbacks) of a traditional religious upbringing (Jewish, in his case) were recounted in "What Dennis Prager Did, and Didn't, Learn in Yeshiva" (Public Square, October 1995). His sympathetic regard for public religious displays at Christmastime will appear in the December issue. Now Prager is replacing his quarterly newsletter, *Ultimate Issues*, with a biweekly commentary called *The Prager Perspective*. It promises to loose upon the world an unaccustomed measure of sanity. ($48 per year for twenty-four issues. 10573 W. Pico Boulevard #167, Los Angeles, CA 90064. Toll-free order number: 1-800-225-8584.)

■ "I once stayed in a remote Scottish Highland community called Applecross, on the far side of a huge range of high mountains on the West Coast of Scotland. It is accessible only by sea or a perilous mountain road, and the form of Presbyterianism practised there is ultra-austere. Even in this small community there are different divisions of the Calvinist Church, and separate chapels, and each year when Easter approaches, the only time at which Communion is taken, the elders of the most austere chapel decide which of the congregation is worthy to receive it there. If judged unworthy, a man or woman must then retreat to the next most austere chapel, and attend and take Communion there. I asked what happened if a sinner gradually dropped through all the grades and was finally found unworthy to take Communion even in the fifth or

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lowest. My informant scratched his head and eventually answered: 'I suppose there would be nothing but for him to become a *Roman Caathlic.*'" That's from Paul Johnson's new book, *The Quest for God: A Personal Pilgrimage* (HarperCollins). Those who know and admire Johnson's earlier work, including major books such as *Modern Times* and *A History of the Jews,* will want to take a look at this engaging volume. It is very personal, very much like a long after-dinner conversation in which friends have pressed Johnson to tell them what he *really* believes about all the really big questions—human nature, virtue, death, judgment, heaven, hell. Professional theologians will quibble at many points, and much of the book is more assertion than argumentation, but it is altogether winsome. Johnson manages to keep pietistic excesses at bay, but there is no doubt that the book is written out of a deep piety and eagerness to share his faith, which he confesses is the most important thing in his life. Of the book he writes in the preface, "I pray it will provide a degree of comfort for those, like me, who wish to move from obscurity to daylight, from doubt to certitude, from infidelity to faith—or from faith to greater faith—and from apprehension, even despair, to hope." I have no doubt that, on the basis of their reading *The Quest for God,* many will discover that Paul Johnson's prayer has been answered. The self-consciously orthodox are alerted to the fact that, while Johnson professes the greatest respect for the teaching authority of the Catholic Church, his views on some disputed questions are, well, a mite eccentric. But, for many people who are puzzled about the possibility of Christian faith and about answers to the mega-questions of human existence, *The Quest for God* will both delight and instruct.

■ Jim Nuechterlein wants to know when we might expect your list of people to whom to send these sample copies. I told him I would ask.

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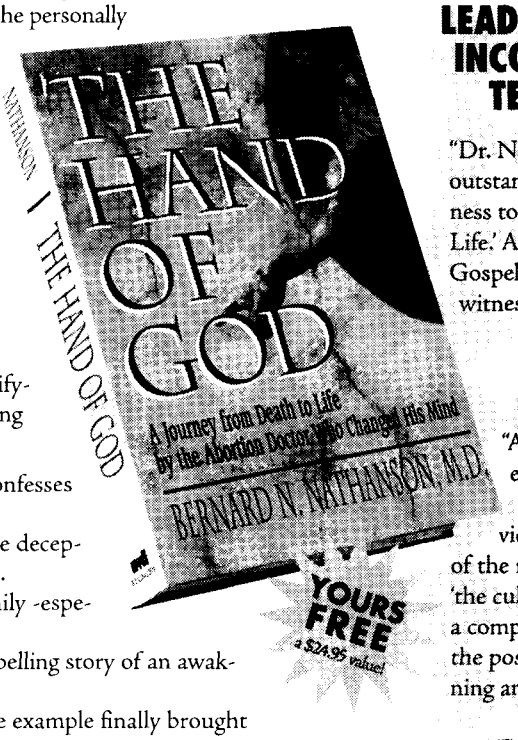
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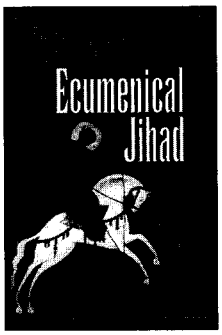

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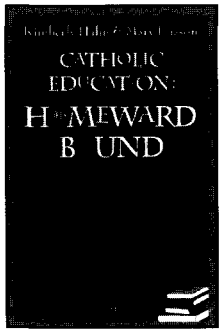

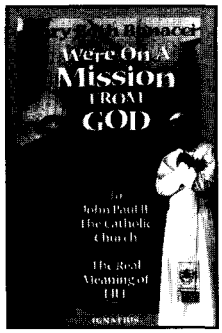

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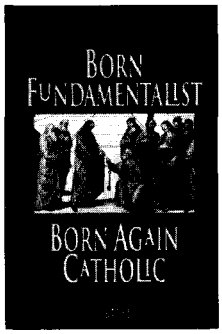

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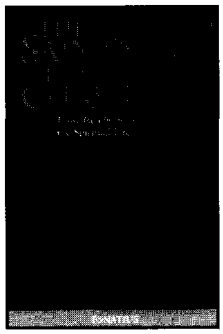

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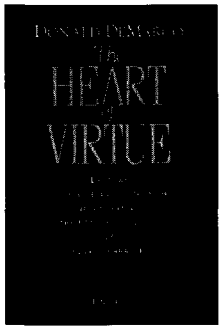

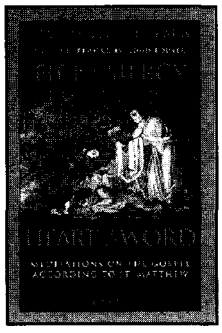

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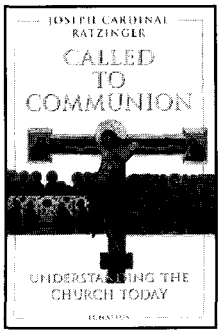

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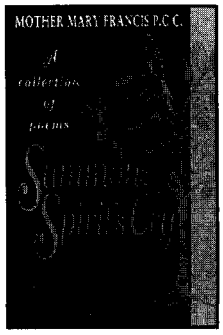

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